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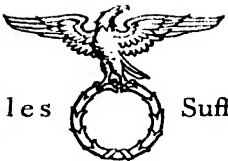
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WHERE CANNIBALS ROAM

By
MERLIN MOORE TAYLOR



Geoffrey Bles  Suffolk St., Pall Mall
London

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ON THE MARCH



THE BIG CANOE FROM BIOTO

CHAPTER I

PAPUA, NEVER-NEVER LAND

I HAVE seen the heart of black Papua, where the foot of no other white man has ever trod, and I shall never forget it. Too deeply are etched upon my memory the details of its deep, dank jungle ; its mountain ranges whose tops are lost amid the swirling mists, its terrifying precipices and rushing streams, its hardships and cruelties, and the sight and scent of its cannibal peoples in their hamlets on the peaks.

Even now, thousands of miles away from it all and with its vividness dimmed by time, I often find myself in the grasp of a nightmare in which I live over again those days and nights when inland Papua struck at the very core of my being.

Again I am hedged about by naked black men whose peering eyes ever seem focussed upon me, waiting and watching for that moment of

relaxed vigilance which would give them the opportunity to strike. Again I hear their savage cries in the night, ringing eerily from cliff to cliff across the chasms. Again I see them in ever-increasing numbers in the trail before me, their bows tight drawn, their spears poised . . .

For Papua is like that. It leaves its imprint upon all those who see it. Some catch only its picturesque side and are enthralled. To others is revealed Nature in her most cruel mood; waiting, red-toothed, beside the trail—to horrify or drive mad, to maim, to kill. You love Papua or you hate it—and you do either intensely.

Papua is that part of New Guinea which has been a British possession since its formal annexation in 1883; although as early as 1846 a British naval officer took possession of the southern part, an act which his government did not follow up. It is bounded on the west by Dutch New Guinea and on the north by former German New Guinea, which passed under control of the Commonwealth of Australia during the world war. New Guinea has been compared to a huge bird hovering over the north of the Australian con-

continent. Carrying the comparison farther, Papua may be likened to the tail of this bird. At its longest part from east to west Papua is some 800 miles across, while its greatest width is about 200 miles and its coastline on the mainland 1,738 miles. In the adjacent islands Papua has an additional coastline of 1,936 miles. Of its approximate area of 90,540 square miles, 87,786 are on the mainland.

The north-west tip of Papua extends to the 5th parallel of south latitude at the point where it intersects with the 141st degree of east longitude and the boundary follows that line south to the Arafura Sea, except between the 6th and 7th degrees south, where it bends into Dutch territory to follow the west bank of the Fly River. To the south-east, Papuan territory extends to the intersection of the 12th parallel and the 155th degree in order to take in the islands of the Louisiade Archipelago.

Along the border of former German New Guinea and extending to the south-eastern tip of the Papuan mountains runs a chain of mountains, the Owen Stanley Range, that virtually makes all of the island lying between the 145th and 151st

degrees a mass of precipitous peaks, often extending to the water's edge and always found within twenty miles of the southern coast. All of these mountains are connected to the Owen Stanley Range, and the entire system is generally referred to by the very vague term of "the Main Range."

Due mostly to the difficulty of getting about amid the mountains and of transporting supplies, half of Papua never has been explored at all, and of the other half little is known. Flying trips have been made across some of the more remote places by government officers at long intervals, but explorers generally have fought shy of inland Papua or have been driven out in despair. Even D'Albertis, the veteran Dutch explorer, who added much to the knowledge of Papua, balked at going into the mountains. "It is easier," he said, "to ascend the highest peaks of the European Alps with an alpenstock than to cross an ordinary hill in New Guinea," and those who have encountered the hardships which fall to the lot of the inland traveller will bear him out.

In my ignorance of all this I welcomed the

opportunity to go to inland Papua, which came to me while I was in Sydney, Australia. His Excellency, Judge J. H. P. Murray, who for around a score of years has been Lieutenant-Governor and the executive of Papua, was in Sydney at the time.

For a time he refused to give his sanction for an expedition into unexplored cannibal land. He was not keen for writers or photographers to go gallivanting around in the interior exciting the natives. Besides, scarcely a year before, an Australian free-lance whom he permitted to accompany him on an inspection trip had, as His Excellency's secretary put it, "foully betrayed" him.

"Do you know what happened?" demanded he. "This fellow came to Port Moresby as a guest at Government House, went with the Governor on his yacht down the coast and started inland with him. They were going to a mission station about sixty miles away, to look over a new stretch of missionary-made road in thoroughly controlled territory, a purely routine duty. The Governor didn't have any weapon, but carried a stick to help him over the rough places. There

hadn't been even a killing in that district in months. Most of the natives were mission converts. They helped to make the roads, and there was a government native constable in almost every village, waxing fat and lazy because he had nothing to do.

"Not much to stir the blood there, was there? Well, sir, about the second day His Excellency sprained his ankle and had to be carried back to the coast. He didn't want to spoil things for this journalist chap, so sent him on with a couple of native policemen. A few weeks later I saw him back in Port Moresby, and he was so grateful he almost slobbered." He paused as if too disgusted to go on.

"When he got back to Australia his imagination ran away with him," he resumed after a bit. "He wrote tales of blood-curdling adventure and thrills, of a battle with cannibals in which His Excellency was said to have led a charge wildly waving a sword and in which the journalist himself played a not inconspicuous part. Then he made a trip to England, lectured on his so-called explorations and adventures in Papua and, hang me, sir, if the Royal Geographi-

cal Society didn't pin a fellowship on him. Bah ! ”

There didn't seem any use arguing the matter, but we saw the Governor anyhow and put it up to him.

“ I'm going to do what you ask,” he said surprisingly. “ I think you're all right, and you can go inland if you want to. More than that, I'll send along one of my magistrates, a good bushman himself and the ideal guide for you, and give you a dozen native armed constables for a bodyguard. No,” he said, waving aside an attempt to thank him, “ I don't want any thanks. Having granted you permission to go at all, sending the police along follows naturally. Better send them with you than send them after you in a few weeks, with the chances very much in favour of their not getting there in time to save you from being the *pièce de resistance* at a cannibal feast.”

So it was arranged. Richard Humphries, the magistrate he had mentioned, was in Sydney on leave of absence which still had a month or two to run. He cancelled it in a hurry, however, ~~to~~ go with us. Originally, it was intended that

four white men should be in the party, and supplies were bought and equipment gathered on that basis. The fourth man, however, collapsed after two days of easy walking in the level coastal country and went back to the coast via canoe, horse and the supporting arms of a couple of natives. You cannot train on John Barleycorn for tests of endurance.

Harry Downing, a young Australian photographer who had seen service with a medical outfit during the war, was the third white man in the party. What a pal he proved to be!

So behold us, some three weeks later, on one of the two little steamers which are the connecting links between Papua and the outside world. In the holds were some five tons of canned foods, tents and other paraphernalia and photographic equipment.

The second day aboard we discovered that we were not alone in our desire to see and photograph inland New Guinea. There were two British army officers, pink-cheeked, blond-haired, nicely moustached and riding their hobby of anthropology hard. There was a bird collector with a not-yet-expired permit to trap seventy-two pairs of



PORT MORESBY



MIST-CLAD PEAKS OF NEW GUINEA

birds of Paradise, hoping to get another permit, in spite of the fact he was in the bad grace of the government for some reason. There was a fourth man, who took possession of a dining-saloon table every morning as soon as the breakfast things were cleared away and hammered interminably at a bulky typewriter. It was the journalist who had been recognized by the Royal Geographical Society of England for his account of the Governor's "charge" at the head of his men against the savage cannibals.

These four men were suspicious of each other, and when they mentioned their plans at all it was vaguely and with mysterious hints of something they expected to happen when we got to Port Moresby. That "something," we discovered later, was that each of them was secretly hoping he was going to annex himself to us. They did not know we had made all arrangements by wireless and would stay in Port Moresby only over night. The bird man fell down a cliff and was badly injured, soon after he started inland. As for the F.R.G.S. journalist, he found anything but a "Welcome" sign hung out for him at Port Moresby and spent a couple of unpleasant

weeks there before he could get back to Sydney.

Upon the wharf at Port Moresby we found 3,000 pounds of rice—food for the natives—awaiting us; a detachment of a dozen armed constables, in picturesque blouses and knee-length skirts of blue piped in red, and armed with business-like rifles and a belt full of cartridges, under orders to report to Humphries; and a couple of customs officers.

“Why are you customs coves nosing around our stuff?” demanded Humphries. “This is a government-sanctioned expedition, intended to get information and pictures for government use. An American is spending his money to do what the government cannot rake up the money to do—visit the mountain tribes and try and make them friendly. What’s the idea of trying to collect duty? Didn’t His Excellency tell you this stuff was to come in duty free?” The Governor had said he would.

He thrust out a belligerent jaw at the customs men. But Tommy Burns was not to be shaken. “Praises be to Allah,” he said, with a grin, “no such instructions have come from His

Excellency. If he intended to issue them he must have changed his mind after a squint at the latest financial statement of the government. We're in for another deficit this year,' and I, for one, am going to get the Yankee dollars while the getting is good."

He did, too, thirty odd British pounds' worth, when he appraised our stuff at Yule Island next morning.

Yule Island lies sixty miles west of Port Moresby, the capital, and we turned into the waters of Hall Sound, which surround it, before daybreak. Captain Hillman, the *Morinda's* skipper, was in his usual hurry to be on his way, and he tied down his boat's whistle and kept it bellowing until he saw the bearded priests from the Sacred Heart Mission on the hill charging down to the beach and tumbling into the whaleboats which their native boys already had put in the water.

They acted as stevedores for us too, and piled our stuff on the beach and refused pay for the job, although later they accepted a modest donation towards their work.

"That," said Humphries, pointing to a knobby

point at the other end of the island, "is Kairuku, the government station. And that," indicating a whaleboat manned by sturdy constables and carrying a white man in ducks, "would be Lincoln Garfield Grant Connelley, the magistrate in charge. He's a Britisher like myself and one of His Majesty's representatives in the far corners of the earth, but by his triple front names 'twas an American who had the say-so at his christening."

The sun popped out about then and Humphries' pointing finger swung to the north, where far inland the ranges were showing their heads above the encircling mists. "Ah," he cried as one who recognizes an old friend, "there is Mount Yule, that highest peak there, and to the north and east of Yule lies our great adventure."

"It will be good to be hitting the trails again," I said.

Humphries turned to face me. "You've never tackled the trails of Papua," he said. "They have no beginning and they lead to nowhere."

"Those are the best," I interrupted him. "You don't have to go to any special place then,

but can follow the whim of the moment. I like that."

"Heaven help your ignorance," he retorted pityingly and went to greet his fellow-magistrate, clambering up the gangway.

CHAPTER II

PIGS VERSUS WIVES

“**W**HERE do you want to send for your carriers?” asked Magistrate Connelley, when he had installed us, bag and baggage, in his bungalow at Kairuku.

Humphries grinned. “Waima and Kivori villages,” he replied. “At least, that is what His Excellency suggested. He has a long memory, the Governor has.” He turned to us. “Those Waima and Kivori natives are the plutocrats of New Guinea. They own good land, sold a lot to the missions and planters and have more native wealth than any others. They’re fat and lazy and——”

“Can run like the devil,” injected Connelley, taking up the tale. “Two years ago the Governor was going on a trek inland. Waima and Kivori men were impressed as carriers. They got to where the going was rough, dumped their loads

and went home. His Excellency had to wait in the middle of the jungle while the police went out and got new carriers. He was whopping mad, he was, and gave orders that every last one of the deserters should be rounded up and slapped in jail for three months. It's a punishable offence, you know, to refuse to carry for a government party. My police wore themselves out getting the blighters."

"Oh, it oughtn't to be hard to catch them this time," Humphries spoke confidently. "I was in charge here for two years and I put the fear of the government in their souls. They called me 'the man who shakes us up.'"

"Well, I'll send the police out after them," said Connelley without enthusiasm. "How many will you want?"

"A hundred and twenty," replied Humphries promptly. "We'll give them a shilling and three meals a day and a stick of tobacco a week. That's government wages. Have them here Wednesday morning."

"Right-o!" said Connelley and went out to pass the word along to the police barracks.

Monday and Tuesday we spent fixing up the

loads in the legal weight of fifty pounds for each man. When we went to bed late Tuesday night there wasn't a sign of the police who had gone out to summon the carriers. It was along towards dawn when we heard the tramping of bare feet on the path beneath our windows, pidgin-English profanity from the constabulary and angry words from those they herded into some semblance of a line.

We turned out in pyjamas to survey the outfit. A constable came up the path to meet us. He brought his rifle wearily to the salute.

"*Taubada*," he said, using the equivalent for "master" with which all white men are saluted. "Carriers, he come, the bloody black cows."

Even though he violated the discipline of the service by using epithets before a superior, Constable Dengo was forgiven when he detailed the two days and nights he and his fellows had put in rounding up the carriers.

Word that the *Morinda* had landed four white men and a detachment of police and many boxes and bags had flashed like magic across Hall Sound to Waima and Kivori. The men of the coastal villages suddenly were seized with a

simultaneous longing for the bush, and the fact that Humphries, "the man who shakes us up," was one of the white men, had been all the greater incentive for making their departure into the jungle a hasty one. Later, when I had come to see Humphries' methods on the trail, his unerring ability to pick out the laggards and triflers and make them step up, his cleverness in detecting those who tried to deceive him by pretending illness or injury, I knew why those natives had no longing to accompany us.

How, then, had the police rounded them up? It was only weeks later, when Constable Dengo, assigned as my bodyguard and orderly, had become my friend as well, that he told me. He, as leader of the police, had simply played upon the fact that a Papuan cannot bear to be away from his village for very long at a time without suffering home-sickness. So the police had gone directly to Waima and Kivori; but had shown no surprise at the absence of the men. In Waima the police had paused, ostensibly to eat. Around the fire they lolled, ignoring the women and children who gathered around them.

"Why does the number one boss send us so

far after men to carry ? ” demanded one of the constables according to a prearranged plan.

“ Because,” replied another, “ we go to walk about in the mountains. Coastal men can walk only on level ground. In the mountains they cannot carry without falling down. Why should we take them ? ”

“ And the villages of Mckeo, they are far ? ” asked another.

“ If we walk fast and hard, we may be there to-morrow,” was the reply.

Then the police got up and took the trail to Mckeo. They were not surprised when a half-grown boy accompanied them. He, too, was going to Mekco, he said, and would avail himself of their company. They halted that night in another village, miles away, and announced that they would take the trail again as soon as they had eaten. They had come far, and the boy from Waima pleaded that he was too weary to go on. That, too, they had expected, knowing that he was but a spy upon their movements.

True to their word, they went on, but as soon as they were out of sight, doubled back upon their steps, circled the village they had just quit and

on the other side of it camped in the jungle. Beside the trail back to the coast, however, they kept vigil and, sure enough, shortly after dawn the boy spy was seen travelling rapidly towards home.

“Good,” said Dengo. “He will spread the word that we have gone on to Mekeo, and the men of Waima and Kivori will return to their villages. We will start back slowly and to-night, when they are asleep in their huts, we will surprise them.”

That is what the police did, too, so cleverly that when they had lined up the men and counted them they had more than the requisite number of carriers. No wonder we found our human beasts, of burden surly when we went out to inspect them.

Later, after breakfast, Humphries lined them up, examined them to weed out the unfit, made the usual bargain as to food, wages and treatment they were to receive, distributed blankets and gave them his word that as their loads were depleted and we could substitute men better adapted to mountain travel they would be sent back home.

After the first outburst of protest against going into the mountains, which inspired them with fear to say nothing of the danger from the cannibals, the men accepted their fate stoically. But night after night while they were with us they huddled together around their fires in fear, chanting monotonously of the dangers into which they were going and speculating on whether they would see their villages and their women again.

We were to start early the next morning and were tired early. But scarcely had our "good nights" been exchanged before there was the patter of bare feet on the steps of the bungalow and a voice called, respectfully but insistently, "*Taubada, taubada!*"

Connelley got up, rather peevish at being compelled to roll out of his screened bed and face the mosquitoes. He exchanged a few words in native dialect with the arrival. Not being able to understand them, I was not interested until I heard Humphries, on the cot next to mine, jump up with an exclamation and go out to take part in the conversation.

Then he came back and called out to know

if I were asleep. "You'd better come out and get in on this," he said. "After all, where we go and what we do is up to you. Something has come up which gives us a chance to go inland with a very definite objective. There's a bit of a mystery about it and there's likely to be a bit of excitement mixed in."

Who with red blood in his veins could resist a thing like that?

On the veranda, where the rays from a big lamp fell upon him, stood a bushy-headed native. He was trail-weary and his village-constable uniform was stained by the dirt of the plains and the waves which had splashed upon him as he poled a canoc across Hall Sound from the mainland.

"This chap," said Magistrate Connelley, "represents a mountain village that is about the last outpost of civilization and government influence. There is a serious outbreak in Kapatea, the district on the other side of him. The people have gone on a rampage and are fighting with another district, Kevezzi. Neither Kapatea nor Kevezzi are thoroughly under government control. But they are just outside the zone, and this chap says that unless the government takes

a hand the warfare will spread and involve not only his district but others as well. He doesn't know much of what it is all about, but it is quite evident something serious is up.

"His people are relying upon the government promise to protect them if they do not indulge in fighting themselves. It is a critical situation. If we don't show up there and take a hand they will lose faith in the government and likely as not revert to savagery."

"But where do I come in?" I asked.

"You are going into the mountains not far from Kapatea and Kevezzi," replied Connelley. "To all intents and purposes this is a government patrol. You have a magistrate and constabulary. If you will extend your trip so as to take in the warring districts you will do a world of good and you will save me the necessity of making a patrol up there myself. Remember I'm not a young man and a mountain trip is not easy, I have no assistant here and am already behind with my work. Be good fellows, you chaps, and take hold of this."

"I'll leave it to Humphries," I replied. "He knows better than I how this will affect our

plans and he's the real leader of this expedition."

"Then," said Humphries promptly, "we'll take you on, Con. Let this man go to the barracks for the night and you tell us all you can about this affair. I believe you mentioned that it was not the first you've heard of it."

We lit up our pipes and leaned back in our chairs while Magistrate Connelley sent the village constable away and prepared to tell us what he knew of Kapatea.

"For your benefit, you being a new-comer to Papua," he said, turning to me, "I had better explain a few things about the mountain people."

I shall not attempt to quote him but merely to set down in my own words the things he told me.

When Nature created New Guinea she must have been in an ironical mood, for she made it a never-never country of grim, forbidding, terror-inspiring ranges and life for its savage peoples a continuous struggle for existence from the cradle to the grave. Over them the shadow of death hovers ever, for if they are not slain and eaten by the enemies which surround every tribe, they face starvation because of the frequent

failure of their rocky, log-littered gardens of sugar-cane and sweet potatoes. Game is limited to a few birds, an occasional kangaroo, little larger than a rat, and perhaps an emu which has strayed from the lowlands. There is no other meat except the flesh of slain enemies.

So in the mountains a man's pigs are cherished even more than his wives. Though he may not sympathize with this order of precedence, even a white man can see why the black man has chosen it.

Women outnumber the men in the mountains, for it is from among the males that cannibalism takes its toll mostly. So there is great rivalry among the young women for the men who are eligible for marriage, and custom has given to the women the right of proposal. Seldom does a man decline. The more wives he has, the larger and more flourishing his gardens, which they work. So every man has from two to six. The loss of one of them means very little where another is to be had immediately.

But the loss of a pig—ah, that is a calamity ! To get another pig a man must range the jungle and catch it when it is little and raise it by hand,



THE SORCERER'S FEES



TATA-KOA

even to the extent of letting it nurse at the breasts of his wives, turn and turn about with their children. So the death of a pig often will bring about a murder, and that murder leads so inevitably to another that presently the blood-letting extends to villages and tribes.

“The village constable says it was a pig which started Kapatea on the warpath,” Connelley continued. “That much was made plain to him from what the Kapateans howled out to one another from the villages on the cliffs. I’m rather surprised that Kapatea seems to have forgotten that only a few years ago we had to send a patrol up there and make life miserable for them until they quieted down. You’d think the beggars would be only too glad to stay good after that. But that isn’t the real mystery about this affair.

“Ordinarily a mountaineer wouldn’t think of travelling at night for fear of spirits. That’s why they keep sentinels out all day but call them in when darkness falls. They know that their enemies are just as much afraid at night as they are, and that there is no danger until daylight comes again. For some reason Kapatea has shaken off this fear and the warriors are moving

round at night and falling on the Kevezzi folk at dawn. That's another queer angle to it, too. Usually a Papuan does all his fighting from ambushes and doesn't come out in the open at all. Yet these Kapatean blighters are doing that very thing. No wonder they've got the mountains in a turmoil. Well, it's up to you chaps to get to the bottom of it and put a quietus on them. If only I was a younger man——"

Abruptly he broke off and went back to bed.

"Will we head straight for Kapatea?" I asked, as we, too, sought our cots.

"No," said Humphries. "We'll follow our original plan to reach Mount Yule, turn east from there, then north to Kapatea. Meanwhile we'll let it be known that we are going there. The bush telegraph will do the rest. Kapatea and Kevezzi will know it inside of a week as the word passes inland from mouth to mouth, and they'll simmer down in a hurry. Better that way, too. You'd think so, too, if you'd ever been on one of these punitive patrols. They're hell. You go into a district and chase the people from village to village, never letting them rest; destroy their gardens, maybe, or eat them up,

keep the people dodging around the bush until they get tired and give up. Then you grab a few of the ringleaders and put them in jail for awhile. If they happen to kill a policeman, and you can prove it on any one of them, the court usually hangs him. Not often, however. Letting them know we are coming will be just as effective—perhaps.”

We loaded our stuff into the government whale-boat next morning, set the police at the oars and watched our carriers pile on to half a dozen big canoes and set out.

“ Well,” exclaimed Humphries as we bade Connelley farewell, “ I see Tata Koa is still alive.” He waved his hand at an old native who stood respectfully at a distance and grinned at us. “ I’ll tell you about him and New Guinea sorcery as we cross the sound. It’s a good five hours’ pull to the mainland and up the Ethel river to Bioto, where we take to the trail.”

CHAPTER III

“PURI-PURI,” NEW GUINEA FASHION

IF ever you are called upon to cross the five miles of water that lie between Yule Island and the mainland you will patronize the ferry owned by Tata Koa. There is no other way.

The ferry is only a canoe of bamboo with a log outrigger, and it is very, very old and has a tendency to upset in a rough sea and plunge you into an unexpected bath. Whereat, having grasped it when it comes to the surface again, you will help to right it to the accompaniment of blood-curdling white man's profanity which issues strangely from Tata Koa's lips.

Between trips across Hall Sound, and there may not be more than two or three a week, you will find Tata Koa somewhere on the beach, his withered haunches resting upon his heels as he tears palm leaves into strips and fashions them into mats, for which there is great demand.

If, knowing Tata Koa well enough to gibe, you inquire solicitously concerning the sorcery business, he will flash you a beguiling smile from his almost toothless mouth and into his aged, but undimmed, eyes—rather hypnotic and terrifying when Tata Koa is angry—will come a reminiscent, half-longing look.

“ Master,” he will reply in surprisingly good English, “ I am a ferryman, not a sorcerer.”

“ How about your pet crocodile that could turn itself into a man and devour people ? And your pet snake that lived in the sea and came at your call and bit whoever you told it to bite ? ”

“ Master,” Tata Koa will protest, but he will grin at the memories that brings up. “ They disappeared when the white man came with ‘ puri-puri ’ that was greater than mine.”

“ Puri-puri ” is the New Guinea name for magic, sorcery, anything that the native cannot explain. In his day Tata Koa was one of its greatest exponents. But he has reformed, and thereby hangs a tale.

New Guinea has not been governed by the white man so very long—a trifle over thirty years—and even to-day his control extends only

along the coast and a few, very few, miles inland. Beyond that the finger of civilization has touched the country not at all, the native lives as his forefathers before him lived in all their savagery and barbarity and cannibalism, and he bows to but one master—the sorcerer.

He will not start on a hunt, or a man-killing expedition, or plant his rude, log-littered gardens with sweet potatoes and sugar cane, or give a feast or do anything else except eat and breathe and sleep without consulting the sorcerer—at the sorcerer's own price. Wherefore if, upon entering a native village, you discover one man who looks a little sleeker and better fed, a little less muscular, a little more arrogant than his fellows, you will know he is the sorcerer.

This is because to him comes the finest produce of the gardens, the fattest wallabies, the choicest bite of human flesh roasted upon red-hot stones. He demands these things, and he gets them. Otherwise, he will make “puri-puri” against those who refuse him, and that, to a New Guinea native, is the end of all things.

Tata Koa was like that once. When the white man undertook to bring the district where Tata

Koa reigned supreme under control—peaceably if possible, by force if necessary—he bumped into something. For Tata Koa, naked, unlettered, savage as he was, knew a thing or two.

From his father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather had been handed down to him knowledge the non-sorcerers did not possess. In their way these forefathers of his had been students and psychologists. They had discovered that the weather was the thing that made the gardens flourish and the fish bite, and they were able, by watching the changes, to predict whether the planting or the fishing would succeed.

They had learned, too, that certain herbs and plants will relieve ailments and that heat has medicinal value. Also they possessed the dangerous knowledge that the gall of a particular fish, boiled in water, will stupefy and rob a man of his senses; that almost invisible slivers of bamboo if they penetrate a man's stomach will pierce his intestines and kill him, that if a man scratch himself ever so slightly with a stick, the point of which has been stuck for several days in putrefying meat, death is inevitable.

But they resorted to these expedients only when they could not accomplish their purposes otherwise. Hypnotism and mental suggestion are regarded with awe by most white and civilized peoples even now. How much more so must it impress the savage native of the New Guinea jungles. "As a man believes, so he is," is just as true there as it is with us, and the sorcerer knows that. 15945.

So Tata Koa, in his hey-day, had only to tell a man often enough that he was going to die to make that man believe it, or that he was going to get well and he would believe that, too. If death seemed unduly delayed, the old sorcerer resorted to poison, skillfully mixed in the victim's food or his coco-nut milk. Tata Koa believed in delivering the goods.

He was quite a wanderer, too, our Tata Koa. From the sorcerers of neighbouring districts, already awed by his prowess, he extorted the secrets he did not possess.

Charlatans in all countries and all ages have insisted upon having some article handled by their victim-to-be. The New Guinea sorcerer does the same thing. So, lest an enemy make

magic against him, the native very carefully refrains from throwing away anything he wears or touches in the sight of others. The bone he has gnawed, the decorations he discards, even the refuse from the betelnut he chews, is retained until, secretly in the jungle, he may bury it. This habit was most pronounced in the district ruled by Tata Koa.

The old sorcerer was a clever mummer, too. His chants and incantations, his mysterious accessories, his secretive comings and goings, his weird actions when on a “case” gave him a widespread reputation. Added to that he usually claimed credit for having brought about every accidental death, every fatality due to snakes or crocodiles, every boil or sore on a human body, every illness, every bit of ill-fortune that struck his district. Nor was he backward about attributing the good fortune to his own efforts, either.

It was a clever magistrate who put Tata Koa to rout. He applied the ancient system of fighting the devil with fire. Finding himself balked by the sorcerer at every turn, he passed the word along that on a certain day the people, if they assembled in the biggest village, would see what

the white man could do in the way of "puri-puri." Curiosity lies deep in a New Guinea native and few were missing on the specified day.

Tata Koa sat in the front row of the half-circle facing the white man. Upon a stone the magistrate placed a bit of gunpowder, apparently black dirt he had scooped from the ground. He made a great show of calling upon the sun to help him, focussed its rays upon the powder through a magnifying glass, which the natives thought was a piece of smooth white stone, and produced a flash of flame and smoke.

By the time the natives had gathered together again, at a respectful distance this time, he was ready to do another trick. He was glad they were not close, lest they discover that the rifle he picked up was not merely a stick. He pointed it at a bird, called for thunder and lightning (which promptly issued from the end of the stick) and the bird dropped dead at his feet.

Then came a third surprise. He poured what looked like water, but really was alcohol, in a shell and set it afire and threatened to set the sea afire in the same manner, but pretended to

relent when he heard the howls of anguish which greeted his words.

As a final stunt he exhibited a mouthful of white and shining teeth. Then he passed a handkerchief before his face, and dropped his false molars into it. His toothless gums caused a great deal of excitement, but it was small compared to the surprise which followed his turning of his back and slipping the plates back into his mouth and again exhibiting a full set of teeth.

“ Now,” cried the magistrate, “ let Tata Koa come forward and show his magic.”

But Tata Koa was legging it for the bush as fast as he could go. Eventually home-sickness for his village brought him back, many weeks later, but his power was broken. As a sorcerer he was done. In time Tata Koa discovered the secret of the magic which had dethroned him, and, being such a faker himself, he appreciated the joke on him. By then, however, he had abandoned “ puri-puri ” for the job of ferryman.

Tata Koa, however, is an exception. The sorcerer still is a power in New Guinea. Mostly he follows the same path that Tata Koa trod, with variations of his own. One sorcerer, after

a period of incarceration at Samarai, somehow discovered the big radio station there and grasped the idea that it enabled the white man to talk to other white men far away, out of sight and hearing. In his village to-day you will find a miniature wireless tower, a fearsome and intricate thing of sticks and vines and what not, and hanging from its top two long vines with huge sea shells at their ends. With these shells clapped to his ears, the sorcerer maintains he is able to hear what is being said by anyone whose fear and respect he wishes to gain.

Another has a glass bottle, salvaged from the sea, to which he ascribes potent powers. In his district the natives hold what they call a bottle—a length of hollowed bamboo fashioned in that shape—in great reverence. A “bottle” may be handed down for generations, gaining “strength” with the years, and he whose bottle is the “strongest” will have the best hunting, the best garden, the most successful fishing and other good fortune. Needless to say, the glass bottle of the sorcerer leads them all.

So the superstition and ignorance of the savage makes sorcery a lucrative business. He buys

charms for this and that, he believes implicitly the words of the maker of “ puri-puri,” he sees his enemy die as the sorcerer he has hired promises, he steps softly lest he incur the magician’s wrath and he pays tremendous prices, according to his ideas, to protect himself against the machinations of the hired sorcerer of his enemies. But he does not take matters into his own hands—that is, not often.

A native constable, ordered to arrest the sorcerer of his village, declined. The sorcerer threatened him with a lingering death if he obeyed. Faced at last, however, with the alternative of being stripped of his uniform and the prestige attached, he bore the maker of magic to the ground and handcuffed him.

As they crossed the sound to the government post, the sorcerer took from a tiny bag a long string with many small sticks attached. With his manacled hands he began to finger each stick and to each he gave the name of some villager who had died. “ These,” he explained to the curious constable, “ represent the people I have killed by ‘ puri-puri.’ This stick is your grandfather, this stick your father, this your uncle,”

and so on, until he had named seventeen blood relatives of his captor.

“And those?” asked the constable, pointing to six loose sticks in the palm of the sorcerer.

“Those,” was the reply, “are you, your wife and four children. Some day, and soon, they will be tied to the string.”

Whereupon the constable, in a frenzy of desperation and fear, upset the canoe and held the old sorcerer under water until life was extinct. Then he gave himself up to the magistrate and went joyfully to jail. Perhaps in the months he spent there he reasoned out things pretty accurately, for when he returned home, no longer a constable, he declared that the sorcerer, being an old man, had compelled the constable to kill him and in return had imparted to him the secret of his “puri-puri.”

So the ex-constable became the new sorcerer, and where before he had been the white man's aid, to-day he is his handicap.

According to the district, sorcery takes different forms. There is the cult of the Baigona, or the big snake that is said to dwell on the top of Mount Victory. Its chief exponent is an old

man who tells a harrowing tale of his initiation, at which the snake cut out his heart, then sewed him up again. If you refuse to believe it, he points out to you the shrivelled human heart which dangles from a string over the platform of his hut. The Baigona sorcerers base their powers on two drugs, both supposedly beneficial. Through these drugs they claim the power of life and death, refusing them to those who cannot or will not pay enough.

Then there are the Vada Tauna, the most dreaded of all sorcerers, men who live in the bush, avoid certain kinds of food and give frequent demonstrations of their power by perpetrating cruel murders. The fact that a Vada Tauna is on the rampage quickly becomes known and villages for miles around take measures to protect themselves by maintaining strict silence and never venturing from the neighbourhood of their huts. For days at a time not a word will be uttered by man, woman or child in the belief that only thus will the Vada Tauna be foiled.

Secretly these Vadas are hired by the natives to kill their enemies and there is one thing to be

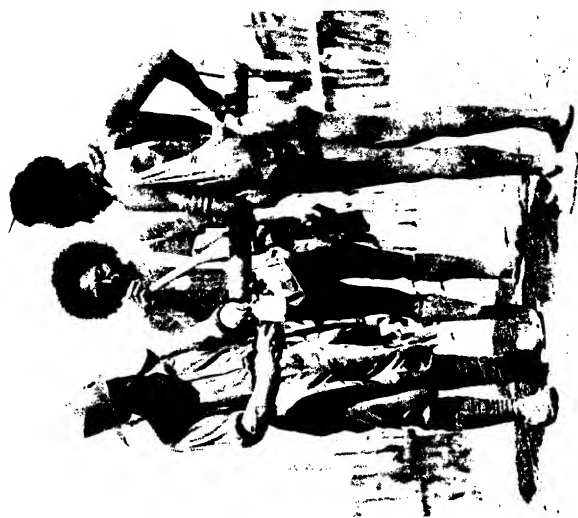
said for the sorcerers—they never give away their clients.

Peculiarly, these sorcerers seldom pretend their magic will prevail against the white man. “ ‘Puri-puri’ New Guinea fashion is good only for New Guinea people,” they say. “ ‘Puri-puri’ white man fashion is good for white man, but it also works against New Guinea people.”

Yet a native sorcerer gamely tried to avenge himself upon us for what he regarded as an insult.



CONSTABLE DENGGO



HUGHPHRIES AND THE BAMBOO "BOTTLE"

CHAPTER IV

WE ANGER A SORCERER

TO get to the mainland from Yule Island we had fifteen miles of water, six across a deep sound and fifteen up a shallow, crocodile-infested stream called the Ethel River. Big outrigger canoes had been ordered from some of the coast villages, and particularly did we want one big canoe from Bioto village. But two days passed and the canoe did not appear. A policeman was sent to bring it. He came back with it, all right, but he was wounded and so badly beaten he scarcely could stand. The men he had impressed into service as a crew were not much better off.

It is a long-time custom among the coastal tribes to launch new canoes and set up the foundation posts of their houses with a ceremony that requires the shedding of human blood. The authorities thought the coming of civiliza-

tion had done away with it to a large extent and that a watery red fluid of mud and the sap of a tree had been substituted generally. Particularly no one would have suspected the people of Bioto of reverting to savagery, because it was one of the first villages brought under control and a native missionary had lived there many years.

Yet, so deeply is tradition and superstition ingrained into the New Guinea blacks that Bioto disregarded the magistrate's order for the canoe for two whole days while its people sought a victim whose blood could be used in the ancient christening ceremony. Word that a policeman was coming to enforce the order stirred the people to immediate action. A few miles from Bioto lies the village of Rapa. Between them is a feud that began generations ago and, while fear of the white man has brought about a sort of truce, the old blood enmity still exists and breaks out on the least provocation.

So Bioto's warriors raided Rapa and seized a victim. The policeman got to the place where the canoe lay on the river bank just in time to mix into the battle between the Bioto people

and an avenging party from Rapa, but too late to save the captive whose head was split open across the bow of the canoe. As his body was tossed over to the crocodiles the canoe was shoved into the water and the Bioto people turned their attention to repelling the foe.

Thus right at the start our expedition was tinged with the blood of a human being. It would have happened anyhow, but it gave us a rather unpleasant feeling and we had not recovered when Humphries discovered that a certain sorcerer had given our party the "evil eye" and that all of the carriers knew it.

Two years before, Humphries had clapped the sorcerer, Mira-Oa by name, in jail for practising black magic. When Humphries, picking out our needed hundred and twenty carriers from the men the police had rounded up, found Mira-Oa among them, the old man was in a towering rage. The police had not been impressed by his importance in his home village and had laid violent hands upon him and brought him along with the common people.

"I will not go. I will not go," screamed Mira-Oa before anything was said to him. In view

of his age it is doubtful if he would have been asked to go in the first place, but his defiance made it necessary to teach him a lesson and impress others if we were to avoid mutiny later on. The government does not permit its officers to strike the natives, so Humphries merely told the police to pull the old sorcerer out of the line and make him stand with the men chosen to go.

Mira-Oa threw a fit then. He dropped on his back and yelled and screamed just like a naughty child. It impressed the natives, but we ignored him and let him rave on. When the last of the carriers had been chosen and the other men told to go back to their villages Mira-Oa was among those whom the police herded down to the beach for a big meal of rice, corned beef, bananas and coco-nuts. Mira-Oa stood apart in wounded dignity and refused to eat any of the food we supplied, but ate sparingly of some titbit which his wrinkled, toothless old wife had brought from the village.

We were to start early the next morning and retired early. During the night, however, one of the policemen woke us up with the information that Mira-Oa had stirred up his fellows with tales

of perils they were to face, had laid upon us the most awful curse in his repertoire and was even then engaged in some of his hocus-pocus calculated to make the curse stick.

When we got down to the beach the sorcerer was humped over a fire chanting some weird thing and making passes over a length of bambo. Humphries dashed into the circle of natives surrounding the magic maker, pushed the old man over on his back and took the bamboo away from him. The end was sealed up with mud and in it the sorcerer had put one of my discarded cigarette butts, a pencil which Humphries had dropped, and a bit of tinfoil, from a roll of film for Downing's camera. The old man had taken pains to pick up some article each of us had handled so the curse would affect us all.

It was very funny to us, of course, and Humphries tossed the whole thing into the water, then told old Mira-Oa that he must spend the rest of the night in the jail house. Then the sorcerer did rave.

"All right," said Humphries. "I did not intend to take you, but to teach you to keep your mouth shut. But now that you have put a

curse on us I'm going to make you carry a load, and if your curse is any good you had better be working magic to undo the curse unless you want to suffer as well as us."

As he was led off to the jail Mira-Oa turned and made some kind of a pass in our direction. Whatever it meant, it struck terror into his fellows and they fell upon the ground and gave way to their fears in fits of weeping.

"That old fool is going to make trouble for us," predicted Humphries as we went back to bed. "I'll keep him with us a day or two, then send him home."

How well he spoke was revealed very quickly.

Our first clash with Mira-Oa came when we reached Bioto, at the end of the water stage of our journey. There all our food and paraphernalia, made up into packs weighing fifty pounds each, was unloaded from the canoes and laid out in a long line. Beside each load one of the carriers was stationed to await the command to pick it up and set off down the trail to the place, four miles away, where we were to camp the first night in a semi-civilized village.

Since being removed from the jail that morning

and offered food, which he refused, the sorcerer had maintained silence. He sat sullen and aloof on the prow of a canoe while we crossed the sound and poled up the Ethel River, and frowned upon the horseplay of his fellows. Daylight had rather relieved their fears of the night before, that and the fact that the police quietly had spread the word among them that sorcery had no effect on a white man and that the black boxes (cameras) we carried contained magic of such great power that Mira-Oa's curse had been nullified. The New Guinea native is a happy-go-lucky sort of a child, anyhow, and as long as nothing happened it was not likely the sorcerer could cause much trouble.

It was up to Mira-Oa to do something or lose caste with his people. When the order came to pick up the loads he stood with arms folded across his naked chest and looked straight ahead. He snarled when a policeman prodded him with a stick, but did not look around. A Papuan policeman is quick-thinking, however, and two of them promptly seized old Mira-Oa, laid him flat upon his stomach and bound a fifty-pound sack of rice to his shoulders. Then they helped

him to his feet, shoved him back into the line and got behind him with a bayonet. When Humphries sang out to start moving, old Mira-Oa took one look at the bayonet and started of his own accord without waiting to be jabbed.

But the look which he gave us as he passed us was tense with hatred and vindictiveness.

CHAPTER V

MIRA-OA STRIKES

“*TAUBADA* (master),” said Dengo, the policeman who was to be my orderly and bodyguard, pointing to the sorcerer, “I savvce this black cow. He try ‘puri-puri’ (magic) on you, I break his bloody head.”

It was a promise that Dengo could easily make. He was a native of Mambare, in the mountains hundreds of miles away, and he had no respect for the black arts of this sorcerer of a coast village. Yet when the time came for him to make good, Mira-Oa used the one thing calculated to make my policeman-orderly show the white feather—a snake. For in the Mambare district flourishes a strange cult called the Baigona, and its overlord is a huge snake which is believed to dwell on the top of a mountain, and whose slightest wish, as expressed through the mouths of those who pose as his representatives, is to be obeyed

under penalty of death. A native of Mambare gives every snake the right of way and turns his eyes in the other direction, lest by chance he seem to be curious as to the destination or movements of his master.

For five days our trail lay through dismal sago swamps, knee deep in mud and water, or fighting our way through thick sawedge grass higher than a man's head. The sun beat down fiercely on our heads and, because we were all trail-tender, we suffered intensely. As soon as we should leave the lowlands and get into the foothills we would be out of civilized territory and rapidly getting into country that never had been explored and where the people live in the same primitive style that their ancestors did hundred of years ago.

Meanwhile we were in no danger. Fear of the white man's police and jails keeps the Mekeo district which we were traversing under control.

Old Mira-Oa seemed to be resigned to his fate, so far as outward appearance went. It no longer was necessary to throw him down and fasten a load to him, and he ate as heartily as any of his fellows. But he didn't mingle with them much,

but sat apart, wrapped in the blanket we had furnished each of the carriers. When he chose to walk around the camp at night the other natives respectfully stepped aside and he stalked through their midst with tightly compressed lips. But his eyes gave him away. When he looked at us there was a venom and hate in them that was unmistakable.

Humiliated before those he dominated through the fear he was able to inspire in them, forced to carry a load and shown no special favours, he was cut to the quick and he brooded over the manner of his revenge.

When he halted for a rest the old man did not sink upon the ground and relax while he smoked and chewed betelnut, as did the others. Instead he poked about in the bushes at the side of the trail or in the long grass where the sun was hottest. He was looking for something, as we noticed rather casually, but he smothered the rebellion within him when we were looking.

We thought he had decided he was licked, and Humphries was about ready to relieve him of his load, lecture him on the folly and uselessness of pitting his will against that of the white man

and sending him back to his home. Then something happened that revealed the deep cunning of the sorcerer.

Api and Kauri, our cooks, were pottering around over the evening meal, just beyond the canvas fly we occupied at night, when old Mira-Oa came stalking by. He stopped for a moment, flashed a keen glance at us where we were changing our sweat-sodden garments for pyjamas, then came forward and, speaking in the Motuan tongue, which is the dialect used between white men and those coastal natives with whom they deal, offered to spread the clothes out to dry.

It was astonishing, almost unbelievable, but we tossed them to him and he laid them out on top of the sloping roof of the fly. Then he departed without saying a word. The next morning, when our orderlies brought the garments to us, each of us three white men made a discovery. The big khaki handkerchiefs we wore about our necks and used to mop the sweat from our faces were gone. During the night some one had taken them.

We did not at that time associate Mira-Oa with the theft, nor did we dream that the offer

to hang up our clothing and the stealing of the handkerchiefs was an essential part of his plot to gain his revenge. Neither did we have the faintest suspicion that the old sorcerer intended that vengeance should take the shape of the most horrible death his wicked old brain could conceive. That he failed was due entirely to the fact that loyalty and devotion overcame superstition and tradition in the brain of a black man who five years before had been as wild and untamed a cannibal as ever stalked another.

The first attempt was made the night we camped in the village of Oriro Petana. As soon as he had dumped his load the old man hurried to the far end of the village and entered a hut which stood by itself, surrounded by a tiny fence. It is thus that the home of the village sorcerer may be picked out. We saw him go and Humphries chuckled and made some remark about the old man hunting for sympathy. Then we forgot Mira-Oa in the many camp duties.

In some of the villages the government picks out one of the leaders and makes him a village constable. He is given a uniform, a big brass badge which he hangs about his neck and a pair

of handcuffs. Mostly his duties consist of keeping the village clean and the trails between villages open and, in case of serious offences, to arrest offenders and take them to the magistrate of the district.

At Oriro Petana the constable was a rather portly old chap called Kiali and bustled about officiously and ordered his villagers around in an effort to get us settled for the night. As a matter of fact, his ideas of what we wanted done were rather hazy and he was somewhat of an annoyance.

Just outside our fly we heard him gruffly taking a small boy to task and Humphries, overhearing their words, went out. Kiali was holding in his hands three coco-nuts with the ends lopped off and was trying to find out from the youngster who had sent them to us. For some reason a village constable always takes to himself the task of supplying white men with coco-nuts so that they may refresh themselves with the milk. It gives the constable a chance to stand stiffly at attention, snap up his right hand in a salute, then with a flourish of his knife whack off the end and tender it to the visitors.

Kiali had been away when we reached the village and had been deprived of this privilege. Naturally he was peeved when the urchin came to the tent with three opened nuts. The boy seemed tongue-tied with awe, and Kiali wasn't getting very far with his inquisition when Humphries stepped in.

"Give me a nut," he ordered. "The boy should be praised, not chided for bringing them."

Kiali was standing well within the light of a hurricane lamp fastened to a tent pole and he was holding each nut in turn where the light would reveal the amount of milk within. Probably his idea was to give the magistrate the best nut. But suddenly he grew quite excited and hurled the nuts to the ground.

"Why did you do that?" cried Humphries angrily. It looked like a case of insubordination, in which case Kiali would have been in for severe punishment.

The old man's bare heels came together, he stiffened abruptly and his fingers touched his forelock.

"Master," he said, "the nuts were poisoned!"

And so it proved when we had picked them

up, broken them open and examined the meat closely. To it was clinging infinitesimal bits of bamboo fibre, pounded almost into a powder. That is the favourite method of murder of the Papuan sorcerer. Mixed with food or drink, the slivers pierce the intestines, set up inflammation, cause a high fever and prove fatal within a few days.

“Mira-Oa,” cried Humphries, hazarding a good guess, and sent the police corporal to seize the old sorcerer and bring him to us. But Mira-Oa had disappeared and when we resumed the march next day another man carried his load

As for Kiali, whose keen eyes had seen the slivers floating on top of the coco-nut milk and probably saved some of us from great agony if not death, he was rewarded with five sticks of tobacco worth about two cents each. Had he received more than that he wouldn't have appreciated it, but in his black mind would have concluded that we were simpletons.

Downing and I were properly horrified by the incident, but Humphries dismissed it with a shrug of the shoulders. A man who has been a magistrate in New Guinea for ten years becomes

a great deal of a fatalist and he expects such things.

“ When we get back to Yule Island I’ll make a report of the affair and send a policeman over to Mira-Oa’s village to pick him up,” he said. “ The old fellow probably will hide out in the jungle for awhile, then he’ll go back home. I’ll give him a good scare and let it go at that. We can’t connect him directly with the thing, anyhow, even though we are morally certain he is guilty.”

Neither could we connect the old sorcerer directly with another attempt which took place some twelve hours later, but in view of all that had gone before, the theory that he was guilty seems reasonable.

Oriro Petana is built on the east bank of a river and, poring over a rude map that night, we decided to cross it there the next morning.

“ The country on the other side will be disagreeable to go through,” said Humphries, “ but we had better take it. It will put us on a direct line to where we want to go. Dress lightly, because it will be baking hot in the tall grass.”

When we all had managed to get across in the

one or two canoes which were available, the order of march for the day was laid out. Dengo and Waimura were to be the leading police and were to accompany Humphries and myself, as they were our orderlies. The other policemen were scattered through the line to keep the carriers moving, and Corporal Sonana and two men were to bring up the rear. Downing was to go any where he wished with his camera. As long as we were not in hostile territory the arrangement would work very well, and would permit us white men to push on ahead of the heavily laden blacks if we wished.

So, having seen the line in motion, we hurried on. Waimura was swinging along with Humphries, myself and Dengo following in the order named.

Suddenly Waimura leaped over something in the path between the high grass that rose on every side of us and yelled. I did not know the meaning of the word which he shrieked over and over, but before Humphries could cry out a warning Dengo had seized me by the shoulders, spun me around behind him and leaped in front of Humphries.

Then it was that I saw coming straight toward us a snake. It was between three and four feet long, and plainly it was very angry. It did not swerve to either side in fright, but seemed bent on attacking us.

"My God, come away," yelled Humphries, and, seizing me by the wrist, started to run. It seemed rather childish to me to flee from such a small snake, but his grasp on my wrist forced me along. His eyes and those of the police had seen something that I, a tenderfoot in New Guinea, had overlooked.

As we fled Humphries called back over his shoulder to Dengo to kill the snake.

"*Io, taubada* (yes, master)," replied the policeman, and a moment later the report of his rifle rang out. How much mental anguish it caused Dengo to fire that shot it is easy to guess, for to him it represented the lord of all things. But Humphries was his master and he obeyed that master's command, although I have no doubt that in his mind there were plenty of misgivings as to what penalty would accrue to him.

It speaks volumes for the training which the government of Papua gives its police. Recruited

from savage life, with its freedom and absence of heavy work, and turned into a hard fighting, competent, loyal upholder of law and order in six months, Dengo in one instant had violated a tradition bequeathed to him by generations of ancestors simply because a white man had ordered him to do so.

Dengo was squatted on the ground beside the reptile, crooning something in the dialect of his people. What, I do not know, but as we approached he rose and stood impassively awaiting further orders.

"I thought so," said Humphries, as he turned over the dead snake with the toe of his boot. To me he pointed out a noose of pliant vine tightly fastened back of the snake's head. The free end of the vine was several feet long.

"Mira-Oa," he said, although how he could tell puzzled me. But he refused to satisfy my curiosity and insisted on going on after Dengo had tenderly borne the snake's carcass off the trail and laid it in the grass.

"Unless I'm mistaken I can show you better than I can tell you," said Humphries. A few yards farther on, around a bend in the trail, we

found the other policeman standing beside a bed of hot coals. On the fire was a deep earthenware pot and beside it a piece of wood and a stone, evidently the cover to the pot and the weight which held it down. In the dust about the fire were the prints of naked feet. To one side a peg had been driven deep into the ground, and fastened to it was another length of the same kind of pliant vine which had been tied to the snake.

It was all very mystifying to me.

"Look inside the pot," said Humphries, although he himself had not done so. With the stick I carried I turned the hot vessel over and fished inside it. What I brought to light was a handkerchief, khaki-coloured and unmistakably one of ours, which had disappeared two nights before when the old sorcerer had hung up our clothing to dry.

"I'll explain it as we go along," Humphries promised, and after he had given orders that the pot be thrown into the grass, the fire put out and all traces of it removed and the peg pulled up and tossed away, we struck out again.

"If those carriers had been close to us we would have a nice little mutiny on our hands,"

the magistrate told me. "That is one of the favourite methods of a sorcerer to get rid of an enemy whom he cannot poison and dares not face. Old Mira-Oa did steal our handkerchiefs, after all. Probably that one you saw in the pot was mine, as he would want to get rid of me most of all.

"It isn't hard to guess what happened after you have come to know natives as I do. Mira-Oa fled from the village last night when his powdered bamboo trick was discovered and crossed the river to this side. Early this morning he took that handkerchief and put it with the snake in the pot after fastening a noose about the snake and tying the other end of the vine to the peg. Then he put the lid on the pot and weighted it down and built a fire under the pot.

"The snake, tortured by the heat, associated its suffering with the smell that was closest to him, that of the sweaty handkerchief. When he drew near the sorcerer tilted the lid off the pot and let the snake out. Then he cut the vine, knowing that the snake, infuriated by his agony, would make straight for the thing that had the same smell as the handkerchief which he blamed

for his pain. In other words, that snake was bent on attacking the person whose scent was on the handkerchief. In this case I believe it was me, but it might have been you, so when I ran I pulled you along too."

It sounded preposterous then. It sounds that way now, even though I have seen in official reports of the government of New Guinea similar cases narrated.

But that marked the last of old Mira-Oa so far as we were concerned. We made inquiries for him when we got back to the coast weeks later, but he hadn't been seen for several days. Probably word of our return reached him when we still were a long way off. Such messages travel rapidly by means of "bush telegraph," and Mira-Oa no doubt decided that a short exile from his village was preferable to facing us.

CHAPTER VI

“ THE MEN WITH TAILS ”

IT was at Rarai, a village of Mekeo district, where next we heard of the trouble which was afoot at Kapatca, in the mountains. For several days we had been traversing the swampy coastal district, headed ever inland. It was flat, uninteresting walking, and the villages through which we passed or where we stopped for the night were but slightly interested in us or we in them.

They were the usual large affairs with a score or more of thatched huts on stilts, the villages surrounded by fences to keep out wild pigs and keep in tame ones, with a profusion of coco-nut palms in evidence. Word of our coming invariably preceded us by many hours, so that always the village constable, conspicuously attired in his uniform and with his badge of office dangling from his neck by a chain, was on hand to welcome us.

Heels together, painfully erect, he snapped to a salute to each of us white men, then whacked off the top of a coco-nut with a huge knife and extended one to each of us to refresh ourselves with its milk.

Generally the bushy-haired natives went about their 'affairs unconcernedly and paid us slight attention. Government patrols were an old story to them. Sometimes the children, their abdomens much distended by overeating, hung around curiously while we made camp in the wide village street, and generally a few women would appear shyly, drop bunches of bananas or yams or coco-nuts at our feet and hurry off.

We white men were much together in those days. In this semi-civilized, peaceable territory the police kept the carriers moving, the loads equitably distributed, set up and took down the tents and carried out the routine duties quietly, efficiently, with only an occasional order to guide them.

So it was that we found it easy to swing along the trails together, often far in advance of the main body, while Humphries discoursed upon native habits and customs, which proved most

interesting to new chums like Downing and myself. It was during one of these chats that I asked about the tailed men which rumour persists in crediting to New Guinea, although the myth has been exploded for some time.

“ Funny, your asking that,” said Humphries. “ It happens that we are just now getting into Mekco district, and that is where the story of the tailed men had its beginning and ending. I’ll tell you the story.

“ For years the villages along the coast and to the west of Mekco were terrorized by savage and cannibal raiders who descended upon them without warning, killing the men and carrying off their bodies to be eaten, burning their villages and abducting the women. Those who escaped always told of the raiders being men with tails, which for some reason seemed unusually terrifying.

“ Came the time finally when one of these villages had lost most of its men and no longer could put up effective resistance. So when next the Mekco raiders appeared they found in the village only the most beautiful maidens and on the village fires food of the best. They who had come to slay and burn remained to eat and admire

and woo. Thus the village was spared further attacks and became friendly on the surface toward its one-time enemies. Thus also was it learned that what in their terror they had mistaken for tails on the Mekeo people were merely the long ends of the loin-cloths which the Mekeo warriors made from the soft inner fibre of a tree.

“ Bencath the seeming friendliness of the villagers smouldered the flame of resentment and desire for revenge. In open battle they knew too well the prowess of the Mekeo men. But by trickery they schemed to overcome that handicap and their own lack of numbers. Peculiarly it was in the tails they once so greatly feared that they saw their opportunity.

“ The Mekeo warriors were invited to a great feast in the big club-house which was the meeting-place of the village. Like all New Guinea huts which are built on stilts, the floor of the club-house was made of bamboo, split down the centre and lashed with vines to the framework. Between each bamboo there was an opening in order that on cold nights the heat of the fires below might warm the occupants.

“ When the Mekeo men squatted upon the floor

about the food pots they carefully dropped the ends of their tails through the interstices to get them out of the way. Beneath the club-house a few daring souls gathered and quietly knotted the tails together. Then the villagers fell upon their guests with stone clubs and the Mekeo men, unable to get up, were easy victims and went to fill the larders of their foes. So the Mekeo men of to-day no longer leave long ends to their loin-cloths. They cut them off close to the body."

Mekeo's people we found were smaller and a little darker of skin than the coastal folk. That seemed to be truer and truer the farther inland we got, the mountaineers being very black. This is ascribed to the fact that the mountain people probably are the only true Papuans, those whose blood never was mixed with that of the Melanesian invaders centuries ago.

The men of Mekco did not have the bushy heads that are seen on the coast. Instead their hair curls in tight little ringlets over their head, while the women crop their hair close to the skull. It is the women who do the heavy work and carry the loads, while the men content themselves with bossing.

“This,” said Humphries as we passed through an opening in a heavy fence, “is Rarai, about the last of the really civilized villages we shall find. Hello, there is old Fournier, the village constable. He’s been on the job many years, perhaps longer than any other man, and he’s steady and reliable. I’m going to take him with us. As soon as we get settled we’ll drop over to the Catholic Mission here and see who’s there.”

We found the priest, Father Gonzales, a tall, bearded man who had spent a third of a century in New Guinea, and one of those pioneers who have bored far inland in their zealous hunt for converts. It was he himself who brought up the subject of Kapatea. I have an idea that it was he who had passed the word first along to Magistrate Connelley at Kairuku.

“Tell us all you know about it, Father,” begged Humphries. “There seems to be something queer about the affair.” Father Gonzales sent his houseboy to bring out a bottle of wine and lowered his voice, so that no native with a knowledge of what he said might overhear and spread the word that he was an informer.

“You have served in many places, my son, and

perhaps know the people," he said, addressing Humphries in the precise English he had painstakingly learned as a concession to the fact he must co-operate with a British government. "But you have not had to deal much with the people of the Main Range. They are tricky, clever and resourceful, and their customs, ah, they are beyond the comprehension of a white man. For two-and-thirty years have I laboured in New Guinea and not yet have I scratched deeper than the surface so far as understanding the mountain people. Those who surround me day after day, yes; those of the tribe beyond, of the villages on the next mountain, never."

He paused and thoughtfully sipped his wine. "Of them all Kapatea, the mysterious, ever has been a closed book. Yet in this land of contradictions nothing stranger ever happened in my time than this outbreak there. Not that warfare over the death of a pig is new," he inserted hastily, lest Dickson believe he was exaggerating things, "but the manner in which the fight is being waged. It is as if some white man directed it, the night marches, the open attacks. Yet this Yapitze, if what I hear is true, is a son of

the mountains, born in Tavivi village. His personality must be tremendous to control his people as he does, to force them to discard the traditions and customs of centuries. It is said he possesses a magic whistle, that by its blasts he directs his warriors, causes them to attack, to retreat, to sit down and listen to him, to fight like fanatics. I should like to see him. You must promise me, my son, that if you capture him you will come back by way of my station, that I may lay eyes upon him. What a power if he could be persuaded to turn his influence for good instead of evil ! ”

“ You don’t know anything about Yapitze, then ? ” inquired the magistrate.

“ Nothing, my son, except that I have told you. But he is the one you must smash if you would quell Kapatea. Forgive me if I seem to force my advice upon you, but I am longer here than you.”

“ Good advice, but hard to follow,” Humphries said later, as we returned to our tent. “ Finding a New Guinea mountaineer when he doesn’t want to be found is not a task for the faint-hearted. For one thing, you cannot surprise a native village

which you can see and talk to days before you can reach and scale the peak upon which it is perched. And you cannot outrun a mountaineer in his native haunts, where he will climb an almost perpendicular precipice at a run and descend places that a white man will not even attempt."

Old Fornier, the village constable, was squatted outside the tent as we came up. Downing had been taking his picture and we saw him hand something to the old man, who took it gravely and without a change of expression.

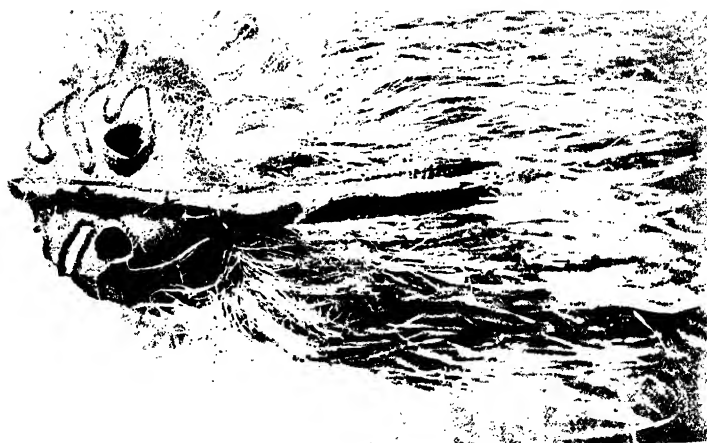
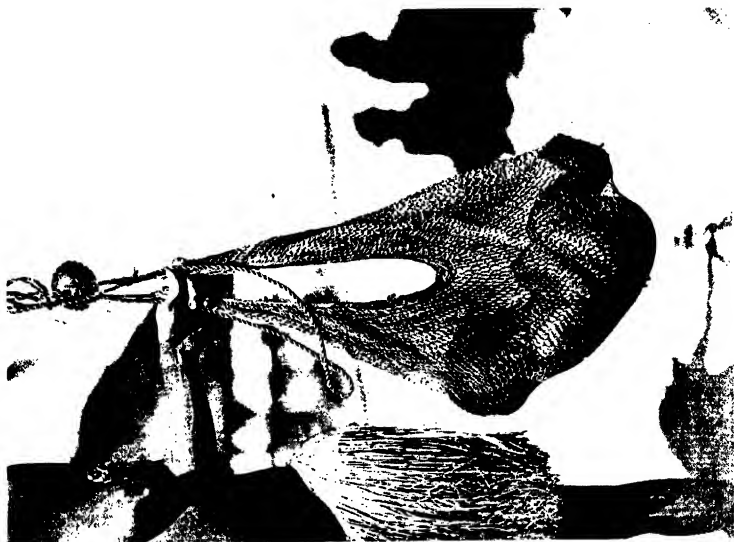
Humphries' face clouded up. "I hope you didn't pass him out any tobacco for posing," he said sharply.

"Just two sticks," Downing grinned.

"Wait till I tell him he's going with us and send him about his business, then I'm going to have words with you," promised Humphries. "Now, look here, Harry, what have I told you about spoiling these natives?"

"Plenty," was the reply, "but I don't agree with you."

It was a renewal of an argument that already was several days old. It had had its inception in our discovery that Downing possessed one of



those minds which cannot see the line between the white man and the black man, but believes that the civilized being and his savage brother have the same emotions in identically the same degree. He looked with disfavour upon Humphries' stern, unyielding attitude toward the natives and threatened to lower our prestige and dignity by his own softness toward them.

“You're making it hard for me, old chap,” Humphries retorted. “A native doesn't understand kindness. He sees it only as a weakness of which he can take advantage. And there is no such thing as gratitude in a native's make-up.”

Downing was disposed to argue the matter. “But the Governor in his book takes the opposite view. He says——”

“I've read it,” interrupted Humphries, “and with all due respect to His Excellency, who ought to know better, he is wrong. Here, I'll produce some evidence.” And he called Api, our head cook, who had been pottering around just outside.

“Api,” he asked, “when white man, he give you something, what you say?”

“Tank you, sar.”

“How you say him New Guinea fashion?”

For a moment Api's brow was corrugated in thought, then he shook his head and took refuge in characteristic fashion.

"*Taubada*," apologetically, "*lao diba lassi*."

"Master, I do not know," Humphries translated. "Of course he doesn't know. There isn't any native phrase equivalent to 'Thank you,' and there isn't any more gratitude in their hearts than there's a word for it in their language."

"How about Dengo?" demanded Downing, with the air of one who plays his biggest trump. My orderly had caught cold. Downing had laboured over him for hours to relieve a threatened congestion of the lungs.

"You laid yourself wide open there," Humphries laughed. "Only this morning Dengo wanted to know why you asked him so often how he was feeling, and when I told him that it was because you were by way of being his doctor, and naturally were interested in his welfare, he said that his health was his business, and not yours, and he hoped you wouldn't ask him any more."

"He's an ungrateful beast," snorted Downing.

"You've said it. Not only he, but every last one of them. It's just the way they look at it,

I suppose, but it wouldn't surprise me to hear that some of these chaps you are dosing and bandaging had asked you to pay them for letting themselves be treated. It has been done before.”

Old Fornier popped into view at the entrance of the tent just then and put an end to the argument. By an odd coincidence he was bringing to our attention the one thing that, many weeks later, brought the question of native gratitude to the fore again.

“ *Daka ?* ” Humphries demanded. “ What is it ? ”

“ I am troubled, *taubada*. ” Worry was etched deeply upon the old man's brow. “ I am glad to go with you, but I have here a nephew, a small boy of the mountains, and I fear to leave him while I am gone. Can he not go with me ? ”

“ What's he doing here and why can't he stay ? ”

Then Fornier told him in the Motuan tongue the story of Payeye, and later Humphries repeated it to us, and thus were we introduced to the far-reaching effects of the New Guinea “ pay-back.”

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW GUINEA "PAY-BACK"

WHEN a mountain native is slain—it matters not whether it is in fair fight or by the foulest treachery—the "pay-back" follows swiftly. An unavenged murder is a stain upon the pride and honour of every relative of the dead man, and it can be wiped out only by the shedding of more blood. The disgrace lies not in death itself, but in that after they have been licked clean the bones of the dead man are thrown to the mongrel dogs which infest every village.

The actual slayer is not always known, but his village never is in doubt. While the victim's body is being skinned and the roasting stones are being made hot in a fiery pit, strong-lunged men boast of it from the peak upon which the village stands until neither friend nor foe for miles around remains in ignorance.

So the relatives of the dead man, stung to the

quick by these taunts, direct the "pay-back" against the village of the slayer and not the man himself. If he, or one of his relations, pays the penalty, by so much more are those who pay back elated and their enemies "made wild," but, failing that, the blood of any of his friends will do.

One "pay-back" leads inevitably to another, with the rôles reversed, and so rigid is adherence to the law of a life for a life that feuds which had their inception generations ago, still are being fought out, though their immediate cause may have been forgotten.

Then, too, murder is inseparably linked with the social law which forbids marriage to a youth who has not earned the right to wear a feather head-dress by shedding human blood. Again the law of the savage allows wide latitude. A full-grown man, a decrepit old woman, or a helpless child may be the victim.

Villages without number virtually have been wiped out by the "pay-back," and the remnants absorbed by other villages while their own thatched huts and bamboo barricades were left to rot and fall to pieces, and be overgrown by the jungle.

Such was the fate of the Oro-Lopiku village in which Payeye was born. His own immediate family had paid such heavy toll to the "pay-back" that by the time he was fifteen years old, he alone survived. Without father or older brother to guide and counsel him and initiate him into the duties of manhood, the boy was in sore straits when his village ceased to be.

It was natural, then, that his thoughts should turn to the only blood relation of whom he knew—Fornier, the village constable at Rarai, in far-off Mekeo. For Payeye's mother had not been a mountain woman. His savage father had carried her off during a raid, and she, with the indifference of the Papuan woman, had resignedly accepted exile from her own people, and worked the gardens and borne the children of her captor. Fornier was her brother, and once he had accompanied a government patrol party into the mountains, and had thus found his sister again, and seen Payeye for the first time.

Orphaned and compelled to decide his future for himself, Payeye had struck out for Rarai over the mountains alone. Avoiding all villages, dodging into the bush if he saw anyone approaching,

existing on the few yams and sweet potatoes which he carried with him, or stole from gardens whose owners were absent, the boy had reached civilized Mekeo safely and obtained directions to the village of his uncle by the simple expedient of saying "Rarai" to every one he met, and following the road indicated by their pointing fingers.

Fornier welcomed and was good to Payeye, for the blood of his mother entitled the boy to a share in his uncle's fortunes, under the savage law which is universal in New Guinea. But between the boys and girls of Mekeo and Payeye there was nothing in common. He could not speak their language, nor they his, and between them there stood a barrier—invisible but not the less powerful—the tribal hatred engendered by the fact that in days gone by, their ancestors had died to fill the stomachs of his, and they were forbidden by the "govamen" to "pay back." Even the children of Fornier could not forget this, for their mother kept them reminded of it.

In time Payeye realized this and the fact that in Mekeo he was a pariah. More and more he felt the call of the mountains from which he

had sprung, and the solitude and loneliness of his daily life but increased the lure of the mist-encircled peaks which he daily saw from afar. Then, too, in his own village he already would have been undergoing the initiation into the ways of a man, and might even have won the right to wear the insignia of murder. In the little net bag which hung from his shoulder he treasured a handful of gaudy cockatoo feathers from which his head-dress was to have been made. He knew that they never would serve their intended purpose as long as he remained in Rarai, for Mekeo had yielded to the mysterious "govamen" which had a habit of getting "wild" and punishing those who killed by taking them away and never bringing them back.

Fornier knew all this, of course, and he feared to let the boy stay behind, subject to whatever ingenious cruelties his hereditary enemies might inflict. If the boy could go with us, it would solve that problem, would provide us with an interpreter in the Oro-Lopiku country and might make the boy more contented upon his return.

"That means another mouth to feed," Hum-

phries said. It is always like that in inland New Guinea. Food is the first thing to be taken into consideration, for a carrier will eat up his fifty-pound load of rice in a month at most, and every non-carrier reduces the supplies alarmingly fast. However he told Fornier to produce the boy. •

Bringing Payeye to us was not an easy task. The moment he had heard that the "govamen" was coming, he had fled into the bush, and it was not until hunger drove him to his uncle's hut by the back way that Fornier could catch him. Then he had to call on a policeman for help before he could drag the youngster—biting, kicking and scratching—to the foot of the rest-house steps.

Payeye was a stripling, with the long limbs and splayed feet of the mountaineer, and his back had that exaggerated curve which comes from frequent ascending and descending steep places. He stood before us, naked save for a tapa loin-cloth, shaking like a leaf in the wind, his head bowed, and every quivering line of his body emphasizing his terror. I think Downing must have been quicker than we in sensing the boy

for what he was, more of a little wild animal than a human being, for he got up and put his arm across Payeye's shoulders and talked to him soothingly. And after a bit Payeye quit trembling, and, when he raised his head, his one wall-eye emphasized the look of suffering on his face.

"He's much too small for a carrier, yet he'll eat as much as a full-grown man," Humphries mused aloud, reverting to the one thing which must be the deciding factor in his decision. Sympathy for either Fornier or the boy could not enter into it.

"Why wouldn't he do for a camera boy?" asked Downing, and we laughed aloud. That always was his solution for a problem of this kind. Every time he believed Humphries or I were inclined to be harsh with a carrier Downing discovered pressing need for another camera boy, although Aitsi-qua, mission reared and taught, and Immanuel, half-caste offspring of a Manila man and a Thursday Island woman, filled the job to perfection.

"All right," said Humphries. "He's yours from now on, but don't ever try to give him back to me."

One of the few times I ever saw Payeye smile broadly was when Fournier told him he was to accompany us. Ordinarily he was a sullen, grumpy little beggar, who had little use for either Humphries or myself, feared the police immensely and would not associate with the carriers, although they were coastal boys who did not share the Mekko hatred for mountain folk. But they called him " mero miraki " which means little boy, but which Payeye, almost a man in his own eyes, viewed as a deadly insult.

Downing's liking for the boy was not a passing fancy. He favoured Payeye above all the other recipients of his sympathies, fed the boy titbits from his own plate, supplied him with high-priced cigarettes, saw to it that he was not devilled too much by the others, and even went so far as to bed him down in an end of our tent one night. Coming in late after a conference around the camp fire, Humphries and I stumbled over Payeye in the dark, and he, suddenly awakened, retaliated by biting Humphries on the leg. Then, realizing what he had done, he rolled out under the edge of the canvas, freed himself of the sack in which he had been encased, and fled into the

night. After that he avoided both of us at all times.

But Downing's kindness he rewarded with dog-like devotion, and followed him about from the time that we arose in the early dawn until we blew out our hurricane lamps at night, and chased him away; squatted near by when the white man stopped, and seemed eager to anticipate his every wish, although neither of them could speak a word the other could understand. From carrying water to the portable dark-room tent and watching Immanuel wash the negatives which Downing nightly developed, Payeye finally was promoted to negative-washer himself. It angered him exceedingly, however, that Immanuel and Aitsiqua should be permitted inside the tent, and he barred out. His savage brain could not encompass the mysteries of the camera, and not even a sharp negative in which he should have seen some object or person, brought the slightest sign of recognition to his face.

This was a great disappointment to Downing, for Payeye was undeniably bright and intelligent. So when one day a readjustment of loads brought to light a box of photographic printing paper,

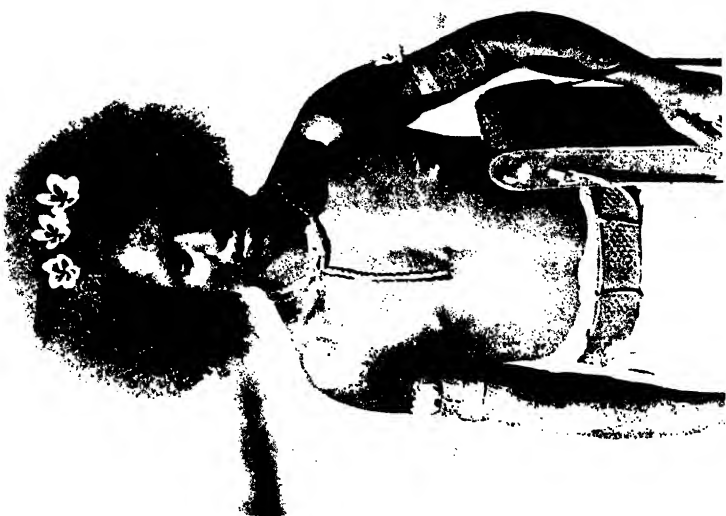
Downing saw an opportunity again to try to make Payeye realize what he was doing. That night he forgave the fact that mountain Papuans have a peculiarly sharp odour about them as a result of their aversion to bathing, and invited Payeye into the dark-room. Before the boy's eyes he removed the film pack from a camera and put the films into the developer, passed them into the hypo and washed them then and there. Payeye watched politely, but seemed impressed but little. He had never seen any other white men save the bewhiskered priest at Rarai, and most of the things we did were incomprehensible to him.

The next night, however, when the negatives had dried, Downing started to print. He made Payeye stand close as the sensitized paper was exposed to the negative, then was dropped into the developer. As the solution got in its work, Payeye began to take notice. Then it flashed upon him that he was gazing upon the reproduction of something he had seen a day before, and with a yell of terror he bolted for the curtained doorway, became enmeshed in its folds and brought the whole tent crashing to the ground.

In New Guinea all mountain hamlets are built upon the tops of peaks which offer a good view of the surrounding country, so that our approach was seen long before we got to Kepolipoli, where the feast had been held. Naturally, the Kepolipoli folk thought so large a body was an avenging party from Maipa, and we walked into a neat ambush. The reception committee consisted of not only the Kepolipoli warriors, but all of their friends from near-by hamlets.

We had descended a small ravine and were following a well-defined trail along it when the trap was sprung. One moment we were alone in the jungle. The next the banks on each side of us were covered with armed blacks. Fortunately for us, they did not attack without warning, or our situation would have been hopeless. Probably the sight of white men stayed their hands. For what seemed ages, but in reality was only a few seconds, the savages held counsel among themselves. I shudder to think of the shambles that ravine would have become had the decision gone against us.

Suddenly from the throng a tall man darted forward. He was long of limb, powerful of body.



His hair hung in plaits from his head, and was shot through and through with the feathers which are the insignia of a man who has killed another human being. He was naked except for a soft bark loin-covering, and his hands were empty. He bounded across the space between us and clasped Humphries in his arms, murmuring delightedly in his ear. Somewhere before they had met, and the embrace was the token of friendship.

When he released the magistrate and made for me, I stood my ground. I did not know then that all mountain natives eschew baths, that they live in little low huts and cuddle close to their pigs and dogs for warmth at night, that the grease and grime and soot of their fires clings close to everything and everybody. So the chief of Kepolili embraced me, and it was the first and last time that any native was given the opportunity. For nausea overcame me when his body was pressed close to mine, and thereafter I left the greetings and the farewells to others.

That embrace assured us of one thing, however—plenty of food. For when we got to the village the chief sent the women to the gardens, and they

returned presently laden with sugar-cane and sweet potatoes for us, and in exchange we gave them a few spoonfuls of salt and a handful of gaudy beads, more precious to them than great wealth.

CHAPTER VIII

WHY THE CARRIERS CAME BACK

THE coastal carriers from Waima and Kivori had been showing signs of discontent for several days before we reached Kepolipoli. Their agreement, made at Kairuku, had called for their services for "one moon"—a month. They knew that the penalty for refusal to carry or for desertion once we were under way was several months in jail. But even this, in their eyes, was preferable to the terror which the mountains inspired in them. Then, no doubt home-sickness had seized them.

The threatened hostile reception at the hands of the people of Kepolipoli was the finishing touch, particularly as it was followed that afternoon by a terrific thunderstorm and display of jagged lightning not particularly soothing to the nerves.

The carriers were panic-stricken and would not be soothed. As soon as we had pitched our flies

in the village, they sent two of their number to inform us they would not go with us, that the danger was too great, and they were going home. We could see them gathering up their belongings and tying them up in bundles. Our situation was desperate.

Around us were at least a hundred mountain savages, armed with bows and arrows and spears. If the carriers deserted, it meant we had to go back with them or lose all our food and equipment. To stay with our dozen police and try to induce the mountain men to carry for us was to invite a massacre at the first favourable opportunity. Distinctly it was up to us to hold our carriers, or the expedition was over. Humphries began to play for time.

“Night is coming,” he told the spokesmen for the carriers. “It would not be possible for you to find your way in the dark, and you have no food. Besides, you have come far to-day. You are tired. Wait until morning, and if you are still of a mind to go, we will talk it over. Of course, if you do go, it means every one of you must be put in jail for deserting a government party. I will get police and arrest all of you in your villages.”

"Master, jail would be better than the mountains," replied the man. "We have never been in them before. The people will kill and eat us. No, we will go back, and we start at dawn."

Near by stood a Maipa man, one of the few from his village who understood the Motuan tongue in which Humphries and the carrier had spoken. There was a smile on his lips when the carrier announced the determination of his fellows to return. When the conference had ended, this Maipa man moved away with elaborate carelessness. He joined the throng of mountain warriors, and it was noticed that he talked earnestly with the village chiefs. Then they in turn gave orders of some kind to their warriors. It was to be seen that all of them were excited.

What they were scheming we did not know then, but their actions had a sinister aspect. It was significant, too, that the women and children again had disappeared into the jungle. Their absence made it seem certain that the friendly embrace of the village chief—everywhere in the mountain a pledge of friendship—had not been made without mental reservations.

"I am doubling the number of sentinels to-

night," said Humphries. "I am going to ask you chaps to take turns about with me keeping watch and making frequent visits to the guards to see that they are on duty. Sleep in your clothes and have your fire-arms handy."

That night will live long in my memory. Even when I was off duty I could not sleep, but napped fitfully. Every little noise in the night, a crackling of the wood in our camp-fire, found me bolt-upright on my cot or leaping to my feet with my revolver in hand. My nerves were tense and tight as a drum. The carriers did not sleep, but gathered about the fires and talked softly among themselves. At the far end of the village a huge fire was being kept up, and about it our hosts and their friends were gathered.

I had made the round of the sentinels about four o'clock and was returning to my seat inside our fly when the mountain men began a chant. It was an eerie, weird thing, and the longer it was kept up the wilder it grew. I stopped to listen, and a great fear clutched at my heart.

Payeye, the mountain boy, had curled up on a sack and was asleep. Beside him his uncle, the village constable, sat with his back against a

tent-pole. I could see that the desire to sleep was struggling with a determination to stay awake. At his side he had placed an axe, across his lap a huge knife.

"Fornier," said I, crossing over to him, "wake Payeye and ask him what those men are singing."

The boy, shaken into consciousness, raised his head and listened intently. Then his lips opened in a grin and he spoke to the old man.

"Master," Fornier translated the boy's jargon. "He say they sing they hungry along man and quick time they eat."

The cold sweat broke out on my forehead. If our hosts' craving for human flesh had reached the stage where they were singing about it and promising themselves to eat soon, we were in extreme danger. That barbaric song of theirs was calculated to work them up into a frenzy and the outcome probably would be an attack. Hedged in by the high fence surrounding the village, we would be in a tight place.

It was not up to me to start anything, however, lest it precipitate matters. So, having seen that the police were on the alert, I went back to the fly. I became absorbed in making notes in my

diary, and the steady tramping of the sentry's feet just outside lulled me into a feeling that perhaps my imagination was working overtime.

Then I became disagreeably aware that the singing had ceased some little time before. I got up and went outside. Kiai, a big rawboned recruit in the armed constabulary, was doing sentry-go near by, and I asked him if he had noticed anything.

"No, master," he replied cheerfully. "The villagers went away outside the fence."

Mentally cursing him for not reporting the fact, and giving me a chance to observe their movements, I ran to the gate in the fence by which they had departed. But, strain my eyes and ears as I might, I could neither see nor hear anything. It was dark still, that intense darkness that seems blackest just before dawn. My watch showed it was almost five o'clock, so I roused the cooks and went back to the fly. The long night was about over and we were unharmed.

The next instant a policeman dashed up to the fly.

"Master, master," he cried. "The carriers are leaving."

As Humphries and Downing sprang from their cots I ran outside. My first glance showed me the carriers in a body making for the gate. Shouting, I cut across so as to get ahead of them. The leader, a big surly trouble-maker, turned to face me, and I saw that he carried a club in his hand. Then something—a stick of wood, I think—got between my legs and tripped me up. The next moment my head took the leader in the ribs like a battering-ram and both of us went to the ground. Over us the mob of carriers surged in a great wave, and when I shakily got to my feet they were running pell-mell down the slope in the direction from which we had come.

“Well,” I remarked as Humphries came up and prodded my victim with his foot. “I kept one carrier from running away. What’s the reason the police let the others escape?”

“The carriers cut the guy-ropes of the fly and let it drop on the police. By the time they crawled out the boys were gone.”

There wasn’t anything to do but sit down and eat breakfast and discuss our next move. We had finished with the oatmeal when a perfect bedlam of noise broke out on the mountainside,

and when we reached the gate it was to see our carriers coming back at a far more rapid gait than they had departed. For coastal boys, accustomed only to flat ground, they were showing remarkable speed up a steep incline. As they drew nearer we could hear their gasps, and their faces were terror-stricken.

And well they might be frightened, for swarming a bare fifty yards behind them came the mountain men, brandishing their weapons and giving vent to the most bloodcurdling cries !

The police dashed out with us and got between the carriers and their pursuers. The mountain men stopped when they saw us lined up. It is doubtful if they knew what our rifles and revolvers were, but there was one man with them who did. It was the Maipa villager who had held such an earnest confab with their chiefs the night before. He came forward to us now and he was laughing, as if at some joke.

" Master," he cried, " I heard the carriers say they were going, and I planned with the mountain men to frighten them and make them come back."

The savages had come up now, and they too grinned ingratiatingly. So we laughed with them

and went back to our interrupted breakfast. The carriers were quite chastened and set about putting their loads together in a meek and repentant manner.

Still I am not satisfied to this day. Did that Maipa man really plot to foil them with the aid of the 'mountain folk, or was that his story to account for what looked very much like an ambush to kill some of the carriers and carry them off to be eaten? Remembering that they sang the night before about being "hungry along man and quick time we eat," I am inclined to believe that Maipa man was simply quick-witted enough to think up a plausible yarn.

You may be sure that we were wary and vigilant when we went back on the trail. The Kepolipoli villagers and their friends went with us to the stream in the valley which separates their lands from that of the tribe on the next mountain. There they took their leave, for no mountaineer will venture beyond his own territory lest his enemies be waiting to slay him. As we clambered up the slope on the other side of the stream they yelled out to us and waved their hands, then turned and went back.

A few hundred yards up on the mountainside we came across a well-beaten trail, only a few inches wide, to be sure, but revealing constant use. So we turned and followed it. Two of the police were in the lead and disappeared around a bend. When we came up to them they were sitting upon a prostrate black and brushing off their uniforms. The man, bounding down the trail, had not seen them in time, and they had run him down and made him prisoner after a struggle.

The captive was badly frightened. His eyes were distended and he shook as if he had the palsy. When he saw us, perhaps the first white men he ever had encountered, he tried to break away and flee. So the police put handcuffs on him and signed for him to lead the way to his village. Long before we knew we were anywhere near it he began to bellow out something, and when finally we were inside the fence there wasn't a person to be seen.

We sat down to rest, and the police were told to free their prisoner. Then we pressed a knife upon him as a gift and ignored him. As we had suspected, he made a bolt for freedom, but when he

found no effort was made to stop him he slowed down to a walk and left the village. Apparently, however, his people were not coming to visit us, as we hoped, so we got up and went on.

It was hot, fatiguing travel, and when we came to a cool little creek a little while later, and halted for the noon meal, Downing and I could not resist the chance to bathe. So we moved up-stream out of sight of the carriers, stripped our clothing and waded out into the water. As usual, our orderlies had followed at our heels and now sat on the bank, laughing as we ducked each other in the refreshing water. Their rifles were across their knees ready for instant use.

I was facing Downing, and he had just replied to some sally on my part when I saw his jaw drop and a look of horror came into his eyes. Turning to look in the direction he was gazing, I too was transfixed. Peering out at us from the bushes at the water's edge were a dozen or more savages, and their arms were drawn back to hurl at us the heavy pig-spears they carried !

We were in a tight fix. Downing and I were several yards away from our weapons on the bank. The rifles carried by the police were old

single-shot affairs. That meant that we had only two bullets with which to start the battle, if one developed.

If we actually were in danger it was a pig that saved us. The little band which had surprised us was part of a village hunting party that had chased the pig thus far. The others were deeper in the jungle and wholly unaware that our big party was on their mountain. At the precise moment when we were fully prepared for a shower of spears the pig broke out of the brush and came into the open on the creek bank.

It may have been inspiration on the part of Policeman Dengo. It may have been his mountain blood was stirred by the sight of a wild pig in flight. Whatever the reason, he threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired. The bullet knocked the pig, over and it lay on its side, kicking in its death struggles.

In that rocky creek bottom the report of the heavy weapon was terrific. That and the flash of the rifle threw a scare into our unwelcome visitors and their arms dropped to their sides. It was a God-given opportunity, and Downing and I scrambled out upon the bank and grabbed our

WHY THE CARRIERS CAME BACK III

revolvers. The odds had turned in our favour now, for we threw ourselves behind a great boulder. Then Humphries and the other police came charging up and the savages fled.

We came in sight of their village an hour later and reached it in two hours more. Unlike many of these mountain hamlets, it had a flat space, and we decided to throw up our flies and camp there. Naturally, it was deserted, but we soon discovered that the people were not far away and were watching us from the safety of the jungle. By signs one of the police beckoned a warrior into the open and gradually induced him to come close enough for the embrace, which is the token of friendship.

The pig which had been killed had been brought along with us. It was presented to the warrior, who set about building a fire then and there, preparatory to cooking it. All the time he kept yelling to his fellows, apparently telling them we were friends. When at last he was given a big butcher-knife, his joy knew no bounds, and he waved it on high. His confidence in us had its result finally, and one or two others ventured into camp, and at last the chief himself came.

So much yelling and noise had, of course, created much excitement in the other villages within hearing. In the mountains sound carries far, and before long inquiring hallos came from all directions. One of our hosts strained his voice replying and gave way to another, who took up his position on a ledge facing the valley and whooped and howled until far into the night.

The night passed in safety, and the next morning when we broke camp we were not surprised to meet another band on the trail. Some of the neighbours had come to meet us and lead us to their village.

CHAPTER IX

“ LONG PIG ”

THE man who proved to be the chief introduced himself by pointing to his chest and repeating the word “ Abaridi.”

I heard a subdued gasp from Humphries. “ So this is Abaridi,” he said in English. “ He’s got quite a reputation in the mountains. His tribe is only a small one now. It’s had war with its neighbours on all sides and has lost heavily to the pay-back. By the looks of them they have had their fill of ‘ long pig ’ too.”

Abaridi was a big, splendidly muscled man of around forty. His face was cruel and hawk-like, his lips pressed together in a straight line, his chin thrust forward belligerently. Not once while we were in his presence did I see him smile. On the other hand, I did see him in a towering rage that boded ill for the villagers toward whom it was directed.

Under his guidance we had ascended a steep mountainside, and my own laboured efforts were forgotten in admiration of the lithe, agile manner in which this savage chief sprang up the slope, disdaining the assistance of projecting roots and saplings which we seized to help pull us up.

Our carriers were having a hard time of it, and two small chaps were tugging at our food-box when Abaridi sprang to their aid. He reached out one powerful hand, seized the pole to which the box was lashed, and with one heave yanked it to the top of the declivity.

A few minutes later we came to a yawning chasm, forty feet deep, spanned only by a tree which had been felled so as to fall across it. Even our police shied when they came to it. Midway across, Abaridi stood on the log, rocking on the balls of his feet, a contemptuous sneer curling his lips.

Finally, a policeman went across, his bare feet cautiously feeling of the log at each step. Like sheep, the other constables and the carriers followed. Humphries already had taken off his shoes and made it safely, and Downing had crossed with a policeman holding each hand. Being on

rear-guard, I was behind with Dengo, my body-guard.

Heights always cause dizziness on my part, and as I sat down to remove my shoes I was wishing heartily that I was anywhere but there, faced with the necessity of crossing that log. I looked up to see Abaridi leaping across to my side. I am almost six feet tall and I weigh a hundred and sixty odd pounds, but, as easily as if I had been a rag doll, the cannibal picked me up in his arms and ran back across the log. In the very feel of his arms about me, in the sureness with which he handled me, one could sense great strength.

We reached a village—in which we saw the only hut of its kind that ever was discovered in New Guinea, shaped like the tepee of our American Indians.

“ They saw a bird’s house in the woods and decided to build one like it,” Abaridi explained through an interpreter. His own village lay over another high spur, and he seemed in a hurry to get us there. As the line of carriers moved off, I saw that we were going to need four men to carry the extra loads. Abaridi called upon the

villagers to supply the carriers. They made no move.

Abaridi was standing beside Humphries on the slope where the tail zigzagged back above the village. Suddenly he began to bellow at the villagers. Rage was in his tones as he berated them. Still there was no effort to help us. Abaridi came leaping down the slope. He cleared the village fence with one bound and charged down upon the assembled villagers. His face was working with passion, his eyes blazing. They shrank from him as from a maddened bull. The next minute he had singled out four men, driven them to where the loads lay, and sent them after the carriers at a trot.

Perhaps it was the high-handed manner in which he did this in a village over which he was not chief that within the next hour put us in extreme danger. With three policemen I was bringing up the rear when we emerged from the trees on to a slope covered with head-high grass. The line came to a ravine, and scrambling down into it and up the other side was laborious. It must have been instinct that sent me back a hundred yards with my trio of constables, and just in time.

Following us up closely was a band of at least a hundred fully armed savages !

We four trotted to a little clear space in the grass and shouted at them. They stopped and sank out of sight in the grass, but every few minutes a head bobbed up for an instant of observation and we could see the points of their spears now and then. They seemed to have halted. Then from the other side of the ravine came two blasts of a whistle which told us the carriers were safely across, and I ordered the rear-guard to catch up.

As we moved away at a jog-trot there was a disappointed yell not twenty yards from the spot where we had been standing, and a score of savages popped up out of the grass and shook their weapons after our retreating forms. A few minutes more and they would have had us surrounded. Even with our fire-arms we would have been doomed !

Abaridi's village was really three separate villages, each with its own barricaded fence about it, but all of them joined by lanes which also were protected by high fences. Abaridi's house stood on a little knoll at the very peak of the

mountain, and from it you could see for miles in every direction. There, too, we saw for the first time a queer structure with brush walls thirty feet high and built in a circle, enclosing a dozen tiny houses, like dog-kennels. About the enclosure three boys five or six years old were strolling. Their stomachs were greatly distended, and they seemed to be eating continually. Later we learned that this was one of the great "pilitas" of the mountains in which youngsters are confined for several weeks and gorged with food in the belief that this will make them strong.

It was along toward evening that a commotion was noticed in one of the three villages. All the natives ran toward the far gate and watched the trail leading into the valley. Our own party was keeping close together in another of the villages, for things did not look exactly right, and Humphries had forbidden any wandering about. We white men and a couple of the police were standing beside Abaridi's house, although we had evaded efforts to get us inside.

Abaridi himself did not offer to join the excited throng in the other village, so naturally we stayed where we were, although we were bursting with

curiosity. Still, the point at which we sat upon the ground overlooked the village, and, from a hundred yards away, we could very well see what was going on.

Far down the trail a little band of warriors was speeding toward the village. As they came they shouted and waved their spears and bows and arrows aloft. Two of them seemed to be carrying something on a pole between them. I glanced at Abaridi. His eyes were dilated and his mouth open in a widespread grin. I saw comprehension come into Humphries' eyes, and like a flash I too knew what was happening.

That thing trussed to a pole like a pig, and rapidly being brought to the village, was a human being, and a cannibal feast was in the making !

As the party drew closer to the village I took out my field-glasses. I could see the victim distinctly, fastened to the pole, back up, by means of heavy, pliant vines. His arms swung limply. It was evident he was dead. Had we thought him merely stunned, I think we would have risked a battle by interfering, even if it roused the enmity of our hosts. As it was, I think I realized what a struggle was going on in Humphries' mind.

Here we had just made friends of Abaridi and his savages. Should we immediately forfeit it by opposing a custom of centuries which could do the dead man no good, and certainly would put us in extreme danger? We never discussed it afterwards, but I think we did right in keeping our hands off, horrible as was the thought of what was going on so near us.

When the women saw that the returning hunters had "game," they set about building a huge fire upon which they tossed stones. While these were being heated they fell upon the body of the dead man. What happened then we could not see, but we knew.

Papuan cannibals, with the exception of a coastal tribe or two, do not boil their victims. They skin them and roast them on hot stones, turning the body over and over at intervals with long sticks.

It was thus that, not far from where we were then, a prospector, the last white man to meet such a fate at this writing, was eaten. McIntosh had been dynamiting their streams and killing their fish. Evidences of this were found by the punitive patrol which investigated. The natives

thought he was making thunder and bringing a storm that would destroy their gardens. Not knowing what they were, the cannibals roasted McIntosh's boots with his body and tried to eat them too !

In our tent that night we sat down to supper as usual, although, with the knowledge that food of another kind was being prepared so near us, I did not feel hungry. It was our custom to eat under the canvas fly, with a policeman near by to shoo away curious natives. The constant scrutiny under which they kept us at other times was sufficiently nerve-wrecking without having them about when we wanted to relax and eat.

Thus it was that we were not aware of it when the sentinel refused to allow a small party from one of the villages to approach us. So they left with him a parcel, wrapped in leaves, to be given to us. As we smoked our after-supper pipes the sentinel appeared and told us of the gift. For a moment Humphries smoked in silence, then he said curtly : “ Take it away and bury it, but don't let anyone see you.”

It is the custom among the cannibals to share with all friends the roasted bodies of their enemies.

To each village with which they are on good terms goes some portion. Chiefs receive a hand or a foot, and no one else may eat of either, for it is in the extremities that the savages believe lie a man's strength.

"What would happen if some one not a chief ate of a hand or foot?" we asked in another village, but never could learn the answer. Violation of taboo never had been discovered.

Late that night from across the valley arose a weird, prolonged wailing that lasted throughout the hours of darkness and until dawn. It came from the village of the slain man.

Upon a high spot outside the village our hosts gathered and shrieked back at the mourners. Their words were unintelligible, but there was no mistaking the insult in their tones. Kaiva, village constable of Maipa, told us that they were mocking their enemies.

I do not know what relations existed between the two villages before, but certainly they never could be friends again under the code of the pay-back, which would claim from first one village, then the other, a life in retaliation for the previous one.

Before we left the village next morning we distributed a handful of coloured beads among the natives. It was our return present for that horrible gift of theirs. To Abaridi we gave a knife, thinking we were to separate. It was then that we discovered that he had other plans.

During the night our Maipa carriers had conveyed to the mountaineers the white man's opposition to eating human flesh and fighting between tribes, and given them some idea of the peaceful lives that other tribes were enabled to enjoy under the influence and protection of the white man's "govamen'." It was thus that Humphries cleverly began the education of Abaridi's people with a view to bringing them later into a semi-civilized state.

Even as keen-minded a savage as Abaridi, however, failed to grasp that he was expected to do his part. He thought that the white men and the police were allies whom he could use to overcome his enemies. That was the mountain way. Any friendly savages could be counted upon to help when it came to fighting. With our large party back of him he had visions of revenge upon the only tribe that he could not

conquer—the Amenofu, across the Kunimaipa River.

When we reached our next camping place, upon the Kuefa heights that slope down from the foot of Mount Yule to the precipices above the Kuni-maipa, he broached his plan.

He pointed across the valley to the spurs upon which we could see the Amenofu villages. There, he said, lived his worst enemies. They were always crossing the river to his side and in the jungle near its banks laying ambushes for his warriors. Two of his brothers had recently met their deaths at the hands of the Amenofu.

He had planted ambushes in return, but the Amenofu were wary. They did not fall into his traps. Now, however, with the white men, his police and the carriers to help, Abaridi proposed to lead the warriors of Kuefa across the Kuni-maipa and deal his enemies a blow from which they would not recover in a long, long time.

We had been puzzled, and a trifle uneasy, by the fact that so many of Abaridi's men had come with us, and that all of them brought along a profusion of bows and arrows and clubs and spears. It was perfectly clear now.

Humphries did not hesitate over a decision. Immediately he refused to join Abaridi in such a plan. The “ govamen’,” he said, was no more friendly to one tribe than it was to another. The whites and the police fought only when it was forced upon them. They picked no quarrels, they did not avenge the injuries of any people who were not willing to stop eating human flesh and live at peace with their neighbours. He was going to visit Amenofu, yes, but that was because two years before the Amenofu people had attacked a white man’s party at the river and the white man’s sticks that belched fire and death had killed a chief.

Still, the “ govamen’ ” was willing to be friendly to Amenofu, and it would try to make them friendly with the people of Kuefa and put an end to the enmity that had existed so long between them. If Abaridi and his men wanted to go along under those conditions, well and good. If not, they could stay at home. If they did go along and started a fight, the police would turn their rifles upon them and help Amenofu.

Abaridi could not grasp this. Unless there was to be a fight with the advantage on his side,

he was not going into Amenofu. The white man could go if he wanted to, but the chances were he never would come back. He, Abaridi, and his people, would sit on the Kuefa slope and watch them, and if they did not return the Kuefaites would grieve over the loss of their friends. But positively they were not going on any peaceful expedition across the Kunimaipa.

“Very well,” said Humphries. “To-morrow I shall take some of my men and go, leaving our camp and most of the party here.”

There was quickened interest in Abaridi's eyes when he heard this, and his glance around our camp was significant.

CHAPTER X

KNOCKING AT THE CANNIBALS' DOOR

WHEN our equipment was unloaded at Yule Island, we had derived a great deal of amusement from the fact that Downing had brought along a pea-rifle, one of those little twenty-two calibre affairs to which a boy advances when he has outgrown an air-gun.

On the trail we had chaffed the photographer because he carried the rifle in addition to the splendid revolver with which he was armed.

"If you ever shoot a native with that thing and he finds it out, he's liable to get pceevish," admonished Humphries with bromidic irony.

"I brought it along to shoot birds," retorted Downing, stung to retort at last, "and some day you may be glad that there is one repeating rifle in the crowd."

How prophetic his words were he and I realized on that afternoon on Kuefa heights, when Chief

Abaridi grew sulky because Humphries vetoed his plan to go over to Amenofu and give his enemies the trouncing of their lives.

Abaridi and his warriors squatted just beyond our camp and talked among themselves. Balefu's looks were flashed in our direction. Evidently the savage chieftain had not taken Humphries' refusal in good part.

It was just then that Downing emerged from the fly with his tiny rifle in hand. "Come on, let's have some target practice," he suggested. "I've got a thousand cartridges for this thing, and I don't believe there's that many birds in New Guinea. I'm a good shot. I challenge you both."

Could a red-blooded man refuse that defi? Fifty yards away we stuck up a couple of sticks and on top of each an empty condensed milk can. Then from the door of the tent we blazed away at them. It happened that all of us were in form, and we kept the cans dancing.

The repeated crack of the tiny fire-arm finally attracted the attention of Abaridi and his men, and curiosity overcame their resentment. They came up to the tent and squatted down. Through



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CAMPING

an interpreter they were warned to keep away from in front of the rifle, were told that when the queer stick of the white man gave forth fire anything toward which it pointed would be wounded or killed just as certainly as if an arrow or a spear had struck him.

Then we resumed our target practice. The natives grew more and more excited. At every shot that hit a can they cried out " Ah " in unison.

Then a bird, a rarity at that altitude, circled over the camp, drawing their attention. Apparently it was very tired; for it swooped lower and lower, and finally came to rest—on top of one of the cans at which we were shooting. Downing drew a bead upon it, pressed the trigger, and the bird fluttered to the ground. Then, to the accompaniment of awe-stricken " ahs," he walked over and picked it up.

Abaridi gazed for a moment at the tattered and bloody mass of feathers, then drew back, consternation upon his features. " Magic," he said, according to the interpreter, and " Magic," repeated his followers.

All the rest of that day they carefully kept away from every one who carried a rifle, and the

police, moving around the camp, kept them busy. You never catch a Papuan armed constable with his rifle out of reach. Never to be unarmed is one thing that is drilled into them from the very first day they take the oath, particularly since a detachment sent to arrest some murderers was fooled by the friendly attitude of some villagers, laid down its rifles and perished in the massacre which followed immediately.

At night the savages left us, but dawn found them back at the camp. It grows bitterly cold after sundown in the mountains, and even these people, accustomed as they are to it, will not spend a night in the open because of the suffering it entails.

Humphries was prepared to start for Amenofu. Downing and I were too utterly done up to accompany him. We were only too glad to solve the question of who would guard the camp by staying behind.

Once more Abaridi broached the matter of going along.

"There will be no shooting and no killing," Humphries told him by means of an interpreter. "If you want to go along and be decent and

shake hands with Chief Inawaia, I'll be glad to have you. But there must be no fighting. If they give battle, we will retire without firing a shot."

"And shame me and my people," retorted Abaridi hotly. "I will not go."

Humphries shrugged his shoulders and departed in the wake of his police, who were on their way to the river. Abaridi cast a vicious look after him, then divided his warriors into two bands, sent one of them to sit down back of our camp, and himself led the other down the slope behind Humphries' party. It was such a significant action that I hastily began to take stock of our means of defence, and discovered that our camp was in a serious position if Abaridi chose to attack us.

Not only had the men Humphries selected gone with him, but all the other police, with the exception of two, had slipped away. They were spoiling for a fight, and they preferred the dangerous trip to Amenofu to remaining on guard in camp. The two policemen who had remained behind were virtually useless. One was a green chap sent along for training in patrol work; the other

had for several days been complaining of violent pains in his head and had become so worn out from lack of sleep that he was on the verge of a collapse. But I routed them out of their fly and set them to doing sentry-go where they could keep an eye on both of Abaridi's bands. My own revolver was strapped to my waist, but Downing's revolver and his rifle had been loaned to two villages constables in Humphries' party. I think that Abaridi had planned to take us by surprise, and, if he succeeded in capturing the camp, hoped to ambush Humphries and the police when they returned. Our two sentries, however, were an indication to him that we were not to be surprised, and reluctantly he must have decided to be good. Perhaps their rifles turned the scale in our favour.

From the time that Humphries left us until he returned, what occurred was to Downing and me very much like spending several hours at the movies. We could see what went on, but we could hear nothing. And this was grim reality, and human lives, our own included, were staked upon the outcome.

From our camp to the principal Amenofu village,

across the jagged chasm through which the Kuni-maipa runs, is probably a mile and a quarter as the crow flies. Our field-glasses revealed to us things that Humphries and his men, struggling down the Kuefa slope, swimming the river and clambering up the Amenofu spur, could not see. The hours that followed were tense ones for them, but I venture to think that we, watching all that transpired and powerless to give warning or help to our comrades, suffered the most.

Humphries had scarcely departed when we noticed that from all directions small bands of armed natives were coming into the principal Amenofu village and joining the group already there. There must have been several hundred of them, and from their incessant moving about it was quite plain they were not gathering with friendly intent. Otherwise, true to mountain custom, they would have assembled about the most powerful chief and squatted upon the ground until the visitors arrived.

We saw some thirty or forty of them quit the village and set out on a run down the trail along the top of the ridge that ends at the river. Then a larger group followed and spread itself in the

high saw-edged grass beside the trail. From time to time single individuals were detached from the first party and sent back to the village. Evidently they were scouts returning to report. If Chief Inawaia had planned to ambush our party at the river, he was foiled by the fact that Humphries decided against trying to bridge the stream and ordered his men to swim, because the first party of Amenofu warriors turned back almost immediately and joined the second party. At almost the same moment we saw Humphries and the police climbing up to the spur from the river.

For some reason Inawaia set his trap at the edge of the village, and not where his advance party first concealed itself. A messenger sped from the village and recalled the hidden warriors. Hastily they went back up the trail into the village. If we, with our eyes glued upon the scene, had any doubt of the intentions of the savages, it was dispelled by the discovery that the children and the women, bearing upon their backs heavy loads of their belongings, were leaving the village and disappearing into the jungle.

. When Humphries' men were within a quarter

of a mile of the village they stopped, and for the first time Downing and I saw that at that point a small trail left the principal one and wound its way into the village by a circuitous route. Humphries could not see that, nor could he know that while he and his police corporal were debating which trail to follow, Inawaia was planting his savages on both sides of the main trail and only a few hundred yards away.

For the moment I forgot that I could not be heard, and I waved my arm wildly and screamed: "Take the little trail, Dick, take the little trail." When I realized my own helplessness to influence the decision, I sank to the ground. But I couldn't take the glasses from my eyes, and dimly I heard Downing repeating over and over: "Oh, God, make them take the little trail. Oh, God, make them take the little trail."

That prayer must have reached on high, for when Humphries set out again it was up the little trail, and Inawaia's ambushade had failed. Before the old cannibal became aware of it, our party' had entered his village and was posted where its rifles commanded the place.

It did not take Inawaia long to discover that

he had been foiled, and he called his men from their hiding-places and sent them through the high grass to encircle the village. Not until he had ringed about our men with his warriors did he put in an appearance. Then, according to the story Humphries told us, the old man dramatically emerged and planted himself at the edge of his village. He was surrounded by his own armed men, and he demanded to know who his visitors were and what they wanted.

"We are friends," replied Humphries' interpreter, and delivered a long harangue upon the power of the white man which evidently impressed Inawaia.

"If what you say is true, let the white man come to meet me alone," replied the chief. "And let him leave his weapons behind," he added craftily. Humphries had only the briefest of moments in which to make up his mind. If he had refused, the savages encircling the village probably would have closed in and wiped him and his men out without quitting the concealment of the tall grass. Remember, none of them suspected they were surrounded. Humphries, fortunately, chose the right way. He dropped

his rifle and started across the space that separated him from Inawaia. Over his shoulder he called back a warning to his police. Old Inawaia was as close to death then as he ever had been. For the two best shots among the police, men who could hit what they wanted to hit without raising their rifles from their hips, had the muzzles of their weapons pointed at his heart. Humphries' revolver was stuck in his belt too, and he rightly surmised that Inawaia did not know that it was a weapon.

A few yards from the chief Humphries stopped and held out both of his arms. It was a tense second. If Inawaia accepted the proffer, opened his own arms, then came forward to be embraced, satisfied that the white man was indeed a friend, the danger would be passed, unless something occurred to anger the natives. If the old chief held his ground and became suspicious, the village would become a shambles.

"It seemed like I stood there for hours, watching the emotions that were revealed in Inawaia's face," said Humphries to us later. "I could see doubt and disbelief struggling with the hope and desire to be friendly. Then slowly Inawaia

came toward me, his eyes fixed upon mine, and wrapped his arms about my body. And I hugged him back like a brother."

And at that precise moment Downing and I, on the other side of the valley, dropped our glasses with a whoop and did a dance in our fly, to the amazement and amusement of Abaridi's warriors.

There is little more to tell about what happened in Amenofu. There was the usual feasting and exchange of food and presents and a long talk in which Humphries told the savages of the government and what it could and would do for those who yielded to it and abandoned their practice of killing and eating their enemies. Inawaia was quite willing to join hands with the government, but he was chary about promising to induce his people to quit cannibalism. Indeed, it seems quite certain that that very night some of his enemies graced the feast which he gave his people to celebrate the peace with the white man, for in our camp we heard the mountains echoing the wild cries from Amenofu, and the Kuefa folk told us they were the songs of their enemies who had killed and were about to eat.

But anyhow, the door to Amenofu stands ajar. Whether it will swing wide open in the future will depend upon what the next white men who cross the Kunimaipa do.

CHAPTER XI

THE MOUNTAINEER AT HOME .

WE were well into the mountains, eight thousand feet above sea-level, when we were at Kuefa. There had been hardships a-plenty, and we thought then that we knew the limit of human discomfort, that what was to follow could be no worse than what was past.

It is well that we never know what the future holds. We were yet to learn what it means to struggle through the Main Range, sometimes no more than a couple of miles a day, baked by the almost vertical rays of the noontime, so that even the lightest of clothing became intolerable ; soaked to the skin by the inevitable afternoon downpour, and frozen to the marrow at night, when not even woollen garments, many blankets and a roaring fire at the end of the tent sufficed to keep our limbs from shaking and our teeth from chattering.

We still were to undergo the torture of being

bitten by countless thousands of leeches, which thrive and multiply in the damp soil of the jungle and get to our bodies in spite of boots, puttees, woollen socks and garments. We still were to make the acquaintance of the scrub-itch, dreaded by native and white man alike, the minute borers which get under your skin and cause it to itch and fester and leave sores that only weeks of the most painstaking treatment would cure. Then there was the danger of twisted muscles or broken limbs, for the roots of the great trees of the forests are overgrown with the moss of centuries, treacherously concealing pitfalls and caverns feet deep. The eternal pounding over roots and boulders and logs, the everlasting climbing and descending, with never a stretch of level ground to ease the strain, plays havoc with legs and feet.

The weather in the mountains of Papua is uncertain. At all seasons of the year the sun comes up in the morning with an intensity that seems to sear the human flesh. The afternoon is certain to bring rain in great deluges that make it imperative to find shelter before it begins, and the mists of the night usually are accompanied by piercingly cold winds.

Near the foothills the villages had been large, for in the direction from which we had come cannibalism was so nearly extinct that the mountain folk had no enemies against whom to defend themselves. But as we passed Mount Yule and turned to the east the character of the villages changed, and with them the temper of their people. We saw these villages, perched on the highest peaks, long before we reached them.

Always they were on the peaks most difficult of access, and the jungle for hundreds of yards around had been felled that it might not offer a hiding-place for foes. The centre of this clearing was fenced in by a tightly woven barricade of poles or bamboo, ten to fifteen feet high, and between this barricade and the huts a strip of ground was sown with pointed sticks inclined outward, in order that enemies who succeeded in forcing the fence might be impaled or be delayed while the village inhabitants sought safety in flight. There always were two entrances to the villages at opposite ends, in order that the people might flee by the one if an enemy superior in strength attacked the other.

In the mountains during the daytime and

until dusk falls sentinels are posted where they can watch the trail in all directions, or take position on crags or high points where they can see for miles around, and particularly where they can keep the enemy villages under observation. At night no guard is kept, for no mountaineer ventures from his village after nightfall. Only one mountain tribe, the strange Kukukukus of the Albert Range, is an exception, and its people herald their coming by carrying huge torches of hollow bamboo filled with resin.

The villages seldom have more than a dozen huts each. For one thing, the site seldom is large enough to accommodate more. For another, the gardens will not support a large population in one spot. On top of that, several friendly villages, maintained on as many different peaks, enable the natives to keep a better watch upon the enemy and to forestall a secret attack upon any one of the villages. Sometimes, if several villages have been sadly depleted by warfare, they will combine and erect one big village in the best stronghold.

The huts themselves are miserable little affairs, with the dirt flooring two or three feet below

the surface of the surrounding ground. The walls begin at the top of the excavation and are made of sticks or poles tightly laced together and thatched over with pandanus leaves, branches or saw-edged grass. Inside these huts men, women and children—and their dogs and pigs—eat and sleep. Often the bare ground is the sole couch, and people and animals huddle together around the smoking fire which always is burning. Sometimes a more industrious family will build a low, sloping platform of poles against one end of the hut and sleep there with the feet pointing toward the fire. The huts have no windows and the only opening is a tiny square door in the side of the hut, barely large enough to permit the passage of a human body. The smoke seeps out through the interstices of the roof or walls as best it can. The roof seldom is high enough to permit any but a crouching position, and as there is a strata of air near the floor, the native escapes asphyxiation.

In Mikili, a deserted village, we learned the burial customs of the mountain folk. They "bury" their dead on platforms built twenty feet in the air on poles until time and the elements



MOUNTAIN BOYS



MOUNTAIN WOMEN

decompose the body, when the bones are taken down and given a place of honour at a feast in memory of the departed. The family fattens a pig for the occasion and its blood is carefully saved for the ceremony of painting the skull of the deceased. After the feast and dancing the skull is put away in the hut of one of the family, usually the eldest son, the finger and toe bones and some of the other smaller ones are distributed as keepsakes—to be worn on a string about the neck or in a small bag—and the large bones are taken out and put away among the rocks of the mountainside where they are not likely to be disturbed.

The burial platform is reached by a crude ladder up which some male relative often clambers in order to see how far the process of decomposition has progressed. During the weeks that the body is lying inside its open-work coffin of sticks the villagers have a revolting custom of sitting under the platform and permitting the matter from the body to drop upon them in the belief that the strength for which the deceased now has no use, thus will pass into their own bodies.

The natives collect many human skulls, not only of their relatives but of their enemies. It is not unusual to find anywhere from two or three to a dozen skulls in a hut, and sometimes the little fence surrounding the burial platform will be accented with skulls.

Villages are moved, lock, stock, and barrel, upon the flimsiest of reasons. Often fear that the site is not favourable to resistance of an attack induces its people to desert it and leave it to rot and fall to pieces and be absorbed by the jungle. Or the near-by gardens may become worked out, and as the garden always must be near enough for the women and children to reach the village quickly, it may be difficult to find another bit of fertile ground on the same mountain top.

It is virtually impossible to approach a village without being observed unless its people are many and it long has been immune from attacks. Any doubt as to whether you have been seen and are expected will be dispelled by whether the people wait in the village. If the women and children have fled into the jungle and the men remain, they believe themselves numerous enough to cope with any emergency. You must

be on your guard then. If the women and children await, it is because some friendly village has vouched for you by means of the shouts and halloos which are the mountain method of communication.

The weapons of the mountaineer are simple and crude. Bows and arrows, a spear that is merely a long stick sharpened to a point, a wooden club with an egg-shaped knob on the end, an axe with a bit of sharp stone for a blade—these are the things he uses. A pointed stick serves as both plough and cultivator in the garden.

He obtains fire by a variation of the friction method in vogue among savages the world over. A strip of bamboo is pulled rapidly back and forth against the lower side of a piece of soft wood held on the ground between his feet. A bit of soft fibre is so placed under the stick that it catches the sparks produced by the friction and the smouldering glow of the fibre is blown into a flame.

Tobacco grows wild in the mountains and the Papuan, woos My Lady Nicotine with a joint of bamboo in which are two holes. In one, bored through the side, he places a lighted "cigarette" made of a dry leaf stuffed with strips of tobacco.

Through the other hole, in one end, he sucks the bamboo hollow full of smoke, removes the cigarette and draws the smoke into his lungs through the hole where the cigarette was. Betel-nut is to be had for the plucking, but the mountaineer seldom is addicted to it like the coastal people. His teeth, in contrast to the blackness of theirs, are clean and white. This abstinence, however, is not due so much to virtue as to the fact that in the mountains lime is seldom obtainable, and without lime and the proper kind of bark and leaves betel-nut does not produce the intoxication which is the sole reason for chewing it.

Cooking is the most primitive imaginable. Potatoes and yams are roasted in hot embers. Birds and pigs are suspended above the fire on sticks. An occasional bit of pottery finds its way into the mountains from the plains and foothills and in the same way salt from the ocean passes from the coastal tribes into the plains and foothills and eventually into the mountains, while the sugar cane of the mountaineer goes back in exchange.

The natives are simple-minded, but intelligent. They are adept at interpreting the sign language

and display childlike curiosity in absurd trifles. Bits of paper or tinfoil are eagerly seized, rolled into a wad and stuffed into the holes in the lobes of the ears or through the pierced septum of the nose, where ordinarily a bit of bone or a stick or even a rolled-up leaf is worn. The slightest thing will tickle the mountain native exceedingly, and they will collapse into each other's arms and scream with laughter until they slip to the ground, when they will roll about in paroxysms of mirth. They return a gift for a gift and scrupulously refrain from taking the belongings of another, although they will treacherously set him on a trail that leads him into a hostile village or ends at the very edge of a precipice. They will display the utmost friendship, then lay an elaborate ambush for the very person who has been most kind to them. Only too well did they prove that to us.

The sentinels spotted us hours, sometimes days, before we got near their huts, and the people, vanished into the forest with all their belongings as we approached. Often they could be seen re-entering the villages after we had passed on, and occasionally we could toll some man,

braver than his fellows, into our midst and proving to him by means of some trifling present—a knife, an axe, a string of gaudy beads—that we were friendly, induce him to coax the others to meet us. Then when we departed they were likely to guide us to another village, or to vouch for us by singing out to their friends on the other peaks around.

Abaridi and his people followed us from Kuefa heights until we reached the creek which separates them from the tribe to the east. Beyond that they would not go, but evidently they spoke a good word for us, for the chief of Kaivala and all of his people came to meet us as soon as we had crossed into their territory. It was with some surprise that we learned that, although the two tribes are friendly and although their boundaries touch, they never had met.

Only in Papua could this happen. For the Papuan is born, lives and dies on his own mountain and so infrequently are tribes friendly that each of them has a different language and often a village can see and hear what goes on in another village across the valley, yet their respective peoples never see each other face to face.

Even at that they sing out from the cliffs and in time develop another language which both understand but which has no resemblance to either of their own. And not always is this ability to understand limited to those tribes which are friendly. As often, enemies thus have a common language. How else could they insult each other, their greatest pleasure?

The Kaivala natives were greatly excited by our coming. Perhaps we were the first white men they ever had seen. Our white skins often attracted attention. It was rather amusing at first to have the natives surround us and listen to their exclamations when we stripped to wash our bodies, to have one or two bolder than the rest gingerly touch us and stroke our arms or hold our wrists. But it became annoying after the novelty had worn off and the unending surveillance to which we were subjected got on our nerves. Thus I gained a sort of fellow-feeling for the caged beasts who cannot get away from the stares of the curious. I know what it's like.

It was cold and rainy that night at Kaivala, and we felt that for once we could spend the hours before bedtime in virtual privacy. But

we quickly discovered that our hosts did not mind the rain. We looked up from our supper to find them squatted beyond the end of our fly and looking at us intently over the top of the big fire the police had built. They had come so silently we had not heard them. We were not alarmed, for they had been most friendly upon our arrival, and their women and children had come back to the village from the jungle and were going about their customary duties unconcernedly.

Making the best of it, we sat under the canvas and sought to amuse them by producing from our bags flashlights, blue spectacles, compasses, scissors, whistles and other trinkets and passing them around. When this palled we ignored them and began to hum and whistle old familiar tunes to ourselves. Then they surprised us by beginning to sing. By signs we managed to get what we thought was the meaning of each song—one an incantation for gardens, one for peaceful sleep and so on, and finally, in a moment of folly, by means of mock fisticuff with Downing, I conveyed to them our desire to hear their war song.

They understood and, at a signal from an old man, they burst into a weird thing, half-screech

and half-howl, that brought the police in various stages of undress rushing to our fly under the impression we had been attacked. Those natives who were not there must have thought something was up, too, for they dashed out of their huts, brandishing weapons. As they realized, however, that it was only an entertainment they, too, joined in the song until the mountains for miles around were aroused, and some of our hosts spent the best part of the night explaining by shouts to their neighbours that it was all fun. Their song grew wilder and wilder and the singers more and more excited, until we feared they would work themselves up to fighting pitch and turn upon us as the nearest victims. When finally they had finished we breathed more easily—and we did not ask an encore.

In spite of their friendly attitude they did not accompany us when we departed next day, but left us to find a trail for ourselves.

CHAPTER XII

MEN, THOUGH BLACK OF SKIN .

FINDING a trail for ourselves was no easy task. We knew only that we wanted to go east until we got into touch with Kerepi district, which was civilized enough to warrant our planning to reorganize there, discharging such carriers as no longer were needed and preparing for our dash into Kapatea on the trail of Yapitze, "devil of the mountains."

Getting to Kerepi from Kaivala involved several days of arduous travel, although in an airline the distance probably was no more than twelve or fifteen miles. No doubt there were trails of a kind which we could have followed, only we didn't know which they were and the natives were not inclined to point them out. So we did the only thing to do in such a case—we cut our own trail.

In Papua, cutting your own trail means that you set a course by compass and stick to it,

“through hell and high water,” to use a bromidic expression. And hell and high water it certainly involved in our case. The actual trail-cutting was done by the police in relays of two. With huge butcher knives they chopped and hacked away at the undergrowth, clearing a path wide enough to permit the passage of two carriers, swinging between them a pole from which hung their combined loads of fifty pounds each. It is slow, tedious work and we literally inched along.

Where the jungle is so thick that trail-cutting is necessary, there can be little danger from savages, so we relaxed our vigilance to a certain extent, permitted the carriers to gather in small groups while they waited for the police to open up the way, and ourselves took it easy and let things shift for themselves a good deal.

Then we came across a well-worn trail that seemed to lead in the right direction and turned into it. Immediately, when we tried to organize our line again and establish our police so as to offer the best protection, we found that something was sadly amiss. Our carriers had become insolent and unruly, and the fact that some were coastal men and the others from the foothills

of Mekeo had resulted in a sharp cleavage between them. During the three or four days that they had not been held tightly in check there had been ample opportunity for their tribal differences to manifest themselves and for them to develop a distinct dislike for each other.

Any effort to weld them into a smoothly working machine then was like trying to mix oil and water. It couldn't be done. No coastal man would carry one end of a pole if a Mekeo man was on the other. Each faction tried to shift to the other the loads that were hard to handle. They would not eat together and were jealously on the lookout for signs of favouritism on our part. After there had been two or three individual fights the bad feeling was intensified.

"This won't do," said Humphries to me. "We've got to split them up into two parties. You and half the police will take one and I'll handle the other. We'll keep them separate and distinct except that on the trail one party will follow the other immediately, and in camp all must gather in one spot for protection, but otherwise it will be like two patrols."

Ordinarily the Mekeo carriers would have fallen

to me as the least experienced in Papuan jungle work, because the foothill men were faster walkers on rough and stony ground, were more tractable generally and always swung out into the lead in the mornings. Leading was easier for the white man than bringing up the rear with the necessity of whipping up the laggards, attending to those who became ill and seeing that there were no long intervals in the line. The leader could set a pace to suit himself and, outside of keeping a watch for ambushes, making decisions as to the course to be followed and so on, had a comparatively easy time.

It was the fact that few of the Mekeo carriers understood Motuan and that the coastal boys not only knew it well but understood a great deal of English that finally gave me charge of the latter. The next few days will long stand out in my memory as full of trials and tribulations. In fear of the mountains anyhow, suffering from sore muscles and stone bruises, the Waima and Kivori carriers made life miserable for me. They slowed down the pace, played sick, pretended not to understand orders and took advantage of the police and myself on every occasion.

There is a law in Papua that a white man may not chastise a black and every civilized native knows it, and is quick to report a violation of it so that a magistrate has no option but to fine the offender. Even Governor Murray had seen fit to impress upon me that only in extreme emergency must I resort to fist or stick in dealing with the carriers. So I had carefully refrained from laying hands on a carrier even under great provocation, and while I tried to be just with them I was as stern and unyielding as I could be. As a result I had had little trouble up to that time, so that the natives looked upon me as somewhat of a mystery. Apparently they undertook to solve it by doing everything to exasperate me beyond endurance, just to see if I would do anything.

The limit was reached, however, one day when a big Waima man paid no attention to shouted orders to get into motion. He sat upon his load gazing off into the jungle with a far-away expression on his face. His fellows watched closely.

I walked up to him. "*Toressi*" (Get up), I said quietly. He ignored me. I seized the pole upon which his load was fastened, up-ended

it quickly and dumped him upon the ground. His companions shrieked at his discomfiture. He was up instantly, a short club in his hand, his face contorted with fury. He swung the club as if to brain me and my clenched fist caught him flush on the jaw and knocked him senseless.

"You fool," I said, not at all loudly. "Next time I'll break your *bloody* head."

When I turned around the other carriers were picking up their loads and scuttling along the trail at top speed.

Constable Dengo, my orderly, proved a psychologist in his way. On the rare occasions thereafter when I seemed on the point of having trouble with the carriers he would ask loudly: "*Taubada*, I break their bloody heads?" It always worked.

Humphries knew nothing of this for a long time until one day, puzzled by the readiness with which I obtained obedience from weary, sullen men whom all his threats could not move, he asked Aitsi-Qua, our mission-reared camera boy, the reason.

"When New Guinea boy no obey Mist' Taylor, he goes wild," said Aitsi-Qua. "When Mist' Taylor go wild he hit, New Guinea boy know

nothing long time. Two times he do. They 'fraid him go wild some more. More better do what he talk."

"Two times?" I echoed when Humphries took me to task and wanted to know if I was beating the carriers. "I only hit one man."

"Quite rightly," he agreed when I had told him of the incident. "That would explain why he did not file complaint with me as a magistrate. But Aitsi-Qua insists it happened twice."

To our amusement we learned then that I was credited with a wilful knockout for that occasion at Kepolipoli when, tripping as I dashed in to help stem our carriers' flight, I butted one of the leaders into unconsciousness.

The high-water episode revealed to me the danger of following any mountain stream along the bed unless the banks permit quick and easy climbing.

The man in the lead of our second section, comprising my Waima and Kivori men, failed to note that a freshly broken branch "closed" the larger of two trails at a fork and indicated we should take the smaller in the wake of the first section. No one noticed the mistake and

noon found us lost from the others, we with camp equipment and no food and they with the food but nothing to protect the sacks of rice from the downpour which even then was threatening.

"Cut downhill toward the creek," I ordered. "We'll follow it upstream until we reach a good camp site, then throw up the tents. The others will miss us soon and know that we'll be along the banks somewhere."

We reached the creek easily and started up its bed, between precipitous banks. I was sure that they would slope more gently around the next bend, and when that did not prove the case, that surely the next would remove the menace offered by the coming rain.

Then the rain was upon us, a veritable cloudburst. Inside of a few minutes the tiny trickle of water in the creek-bed became ankle deep, knee deep, way over our heads, a rushing torrent from which the last of our carriers barely escaped up the steep side. The tents were up in a rapidly hacked out space shortly, and we waited impatiently for the expected arrival of the other section. When it did come it was on the other side of that creek and between us a rush of deep water

in which it seemed no human being could exist because of the boulders against which he would be swept !

The rain was showing no signs of letting up, our rice was getting wet, and without food for the carriers we couldn't go ahead. Somehow we must get the two sections together. Corporal Sonana knew what to do. He passed out axes and the police cut down a tree four feet in diameter and very tall and bridged the stream. On the other side Humphries set his carriers to building shelters of branches and undergrowth, and only a small portion of the rice was damaged.

" Good work, Sonana," said Humphries when he had followed his section across the emergency bridge. " Only thing to do under the circumstances. If somebody could have swum across with a heavy rope we might have managed more quickly, but it would have been certain death to have tried it."

" Yes, master," said the corporal, saluted and departed.

Hearing shouts a few minutes later, we popped our heads out to see what was going on. *In the swollen stream, playing about like so many por-*

poises, ducking and diving and unheeding of the boulders, the police were ridding themselves of the perspiration induced by their labours in felling the tree !

They got back on shore easily enough, but barely in time to stop what threatened to be a serious clash between the two sets of carriers. Thrown together by the lack of space which had resulted in their tents being set up side by side they had taunted and insulted each other to the fighting point.

Peculiarly, it was a village constable, Kaiva of Maipa, who had brought this about. Beginning by deriding the coastal men for walking over the freshly-broken branch with which the wrong "trail" had been closed, he had wound up by intimating that when we got to Kapatea, his "friend, Yapitze," would, with his help, feast upon coastal men.

There already existed in Humphries' mind a suspicion that Constable Kaiva had not entirely renounced cannibalism. He was too friendly with certain man-eating mountaineers we had met, knew their language to a certain extent and had been the one who had pointed out to us the

exact spot where McIntosh, the prospector, had been killed and eaten. Too, he had the story of that affair at his tongue's end and had embellished it with details that only an eye-witness could have known.

Questioned sharply about his acquaintance with Yapitze the constable denied it and insisted he had invented it just for the sake of bedevilling the coastal boys. "He's lying," Humphries decided promptly. "He's been at too much pains to explain why he couldn't know Yapitze. I wouldn't be surprised to find they were boon companions."

We let it go at that, however, for we were near Kerepi and he could send Kaiva back home and thus rid ourselves of him if we feared treachery on his part.

In the second Kerepi village we were favoured by a bright sun, which permitted us to undo our packs, take stock of our supplies and dry out our equipment.

"We shall need only sixty carriers now," said Humphries, after the new fifty-pound loads had been made up. "I'm going to keep the Mekeo carriers and send the coastal boys home.

A couple of policemen can take them a day's journey down through Kerepi into Karuama and from there they can foot it home in safety."

But when we came to count noses, there were not enough Mekeo men. From the coastal boys we had to hold four in addition to Naimee, the police cook-boy, who had no close attachments at home and rather enjoyed things, not having a heavy load.

First we called for volunteers. The Waima and Kivori men were lined up to get their pay and turn in their axes and knives. Not a man stepped forward. The Mekeo carriers hooted and jeered them for cowards.

Village Constable Upi-Ume of Kivori was told to pick four of his fellows to stay with us. He declined. No matter who he chose, he said, they and their families would make life miserable for him for ever afterwards.

With a despairing look upon his face, the village constable turned to face the line again. What he said I could not catch, but later I was told that he recited to them the history of their tribe, cajoled and pleaded and threatened and demanded that the needed men volunteer. No one yielded.

"Master," said Upi-Ume, turning back to the magistrate with tears streaming down his face, "I cannot do what you say. My people trust to me to bring these men safe home again. I cannot lay a finger upon four and send them to what may be their deaths. Some one else must choose. I shall go to jail instead." Then slowly he took from around his neck the brass chain with his badge of office, removed from his waist the red sash and belt and laid them at our feet. In the act of pulling over his head his uniform blouse he was stayed by a movement in the line.

Four men had stepped forward one pace. "We go," they said.

Then they gathered about the weeping constable and sought to console him. "Who are these four men?" I asked.

With a sweep of his arms the village constable swept his comforters aside. "Master," he said proudly, "they are my proper brothers."

Looking upon those brothers of his and recognizing them as the worst trouble-makers in the whole coastal gang I had my doubts as to whether we were going to benefit any from their self-sacrifice in order to save the honour of their kins-

man. Upi-Ume, perhaps, had the same doubts. At any event, when the other coastal men, paid and happy, started, he sat upon a little knoll and watched them with wistful eyes

"On your way," said Humphries, but Upi-Ume shook his head.

"My proper brothers stay. I stay, too," he said. "They shall not face dangers that, if it were not for me, they need not meet. I go with them."

But Humphries was adamant. "Your brothers will be taken care of," he said. "I have no use for you now that your people are gone. Go with them."

Slowly Upi-Ume rose, walked over to the four standing apart and embraced them. Then he whirled, brought his feet together, snapped fingers to his forehead in salute to us and followed the others. But as he went I saw tears coursing down his cheeks and his whole body shook with convulsive sobs.

Child-like in the extreme is the Papuan, where his emotions are concerned.

Another thing we learned, too, from that incident. Men everywhere, be they white or black,

civilized or savage, admire bravery in others. For the Mekeo men carried those four coastal boys on chips after that, taunted them no longer, and, if anything, gave them the best of the loads. To the Mekeo carriers, going with us into strange places and unknown dangers was nothing of which to be proud, for to them the mountains were not terrifying. But they realized that in volunteering to go ahead, the four brothers of Upi-Ume had trampled down fears inborn in them and shown the stuff of which men are made, and for this accepted them as of themselves.

As for the Kivori four, from that day they became different men, no longer sullen and defiant but quick to do as they were told. For they held in their hands the honour of their brother and the good name of all their tribe.

CHAPTER XIII

PAYEYE GROWS "HUNGRY ALONG MAN"

BACK in the foothills among people with whom he was ill at ease and not at home, Payeye had been somewhat of a nonentity in our midst. But once we began to get into higher ground he suddenly thrust himself into notice again. He still gave us white men somewhat of a wide berth, following his terrifying experience in the developing tent, but among the other natives he began to swagger and strut and seemed rather proud of his ability to talk to the mountain folk and to obtain from them choice bits of food which none of the others could get. Then, too, he appeared to glory in the limelight of being our interpreter to these people.

His contempt for our laborious plodding up the steep mountain sides, the caution with which we crossed the logs across deep places and shivered when from some high spot we gazed into the

depths of the valleys below us was not to be mistaken. The boy was lithe and agile, took the sharp slopes easily, and descended at a break-neck pace which we could not maintain. If a carrier saw a bunch of betel-nut hanging high in a tree and made shift to climb clumsily after it, Payeye would laugh scornfully and literally "walk up" the tree and get it.

He seemed to realize that we white men were affected by heights and deliberately to bedevil us about it. I remember one occasion when we had clambered up to a spur two thousand feet above a creek to find that at the top it was less than eighteen inches wide and that on the other side it sloped abruptly, too. Faint with exertions and with my head swimming I straddled the ridge with each leg dangling off into space and leaned forward until the grass hid from my eyes the great drop on either side of me. After a few moments I had regained my control and raised my head. Not five yards away stood Payeye, his heels on the ridge, his toes over the edge and he was gazing off into space with a sardonic grin upon his face. Involuntarily I shuddered and spoke to him sharply, motioning for him to quit

it. He laughed shrilly and moved away, but so near the edge that every minute I expected him to go over, to be dashed to pieces on the rocks far below.

It was another youth, slightly older than Payeye, who finally brought about a new side of the mountain youngster. After leaving Kerepi we had camped early in a miserable little village whose people had chosen to ignore us. That usually happened when we came upon one of these little hamlets unawares. Too few to offer any resistance, its people retired into sullenness or fear—I don't know which. Perhaps they knew the futility of opposing us and were resigned to whatever fate their imaginations conjured up as likely to befall them at our hands.

Suddenly far down the mountainside a shrill, triumphant yell was heard. We heard it at intervals for several minutes before a figure burst into view, running rapidly up the narrow trail to the village. As it drew near it proved to be a youth and in his eyes excitement ran high. He dashed into the village and plunged into one of the huts. The next moment he was

out again and on his head was a great bunch of cassowary feathers.

Proudly he paraded up and down before his fellows, then was invited to a seat about the fire. No words were exchanged. None were needed. The youth had become a man. Somewhere in the jungle he had taken a human life and he had earned his right to the feather head-dress of a killer and was eligible to matrimony. But whether it was a man, a helpless child or a decrepit old woman we never were to know. To him and his people it made no difference, and fair means or foul did not enter into the matter. He had killed, and that was enough.

But I am quite certain that after we had gone the villagers bestirred themselves and went out and brought in the body of the victim and skinned it preparatory to roasting upon red-hot stones, as is their custom. At any rate, the next day the wind brought to our ears the song of a feast and from other villages on the peaks other songs which also sounded happy. And we heard, too, the wailing of another hamlet that lasted all night and into the next day. The villagers we had quitted sang because they were well fed. Their

friends sang, too, because to them had come parts of the roasted body—a leg, an arm or a bit of the trunk with a hand or a foot for the chief, the only man who may eat either. The wailing was in the hamlet of the victim, and if already enmity did not exist between the village of the slayer and the village of the slain it was born that day, and another of the countless "payback" feuds of Papua begun.

I have no doubt, either, that on that very night the flushed and exultant young killer gained a mate, the first of several wives. If so, she did the proposing and he accepted, because to refuse meant a beating at the hands of her relatives because he had "disgraced" her. After the feast they met on the edge of the jungle and she accompanied him to his hut for the night, sealing the bargain and placing upon him the obligation of paying her relatives for her in pigs, shells, weapons and gimcracks dear to a native heart. After that she tilled his gardens, cooked his food, bore his children, acted as a beast of burden and shared his affections with other women he might gain in the same manner.

At thirty she will be a grandmother, at forty

an old crone if she lives. He, if he survives his enemies and the machinations of sorcerers, will be a doddering old patriarch by then, no longer fit for the chase or war and too senile even to share the councils of his village.

The sight of this other youth achieving the rights of manhood seemed to excite jealousy in Payeye. He glowered at the other and once, when they drew close together, snarled at him much as would a wild animal. These signs were not lost on Humphries and he warned us to be careful around the youngster.

"He's quite likely to try out something on one of us," the magistrate predicted. "Don't let him get away with anything, but don't hurt him unless you have to."

That night when we found Payeye bargaining with some of the mountaineers and later taking possession of a heavy bow and a handful of arrows, Humphries quietly took Fournier aside and warned him to keep his nephew near him, and at the same time told the police to watch him. Payeye, he said, was ripe for a murder.

We climbed to a tiny village one afternoon in the midst of a blinding downpour that made the

trail exceedingly dangerous, and rendered our soaked garments unpleasant in the highest degree. Anxious to get under shelter and warm our chilled bodies with dry garments from our waterproof swagbags, we three white men had taken a policeman or two and pressed on ahead of the laden carriers:

" This is hell," panted Humphries as we paused for a breath on the edge of a tangled mass of trees cleverly felled across the trail to hamper the progress of enemies who might take it. " You fellows want to step softly. A broken leg here means almost certain death. It would be almost impossible to carry anyone on a litter. So far as I know, it has been done only once, and that was when Chinnery's police got him to the coast after his leg was smashed. But he's never been the same, and his hair was streaked with white from suffering when he reached the Moresby hospital."

" And others who have been injured, what of them ? " asked Downing.

" I believe death is considered preferable to suffering or burdening the rest of the party," he replied. " Ready ? Let's go."

We turned and found that Payeye had followed us when we left the others. For several days the boy's sullenness had seemed to increase. He held himself apart from every one else, even his uncle, and apparently was brooding over something. He refused to go to the cook-fire to get his share of boiled rice, and when it was placed before him, either glowered at it and would not touch it, or hurled it into the bush. Humphries caught him at it and, because food is the most precious thing in New Guinea, rapped him sharply with a stick. Then he called Fournier, and asked him what ailed Payeye.

"Master," said the old constable, "he say he is sick of eating rice and bulla macow and he hungry along man!"

Back amid his mountains the cannibalistic instinct in the boy had leaped to the fore, and, if anything was to be deduced from his frequent display of the feathers in his netted bag, he was ripe to pull off his first killing. But beyond secret instructions to the police to watch the stripling, Humphries had not wasted any thought on him.

Now, as we clambered over the logs and headed

toward the village, Payeye took the lead and vanished. This seemed convincing proof that we were right in our suspicion that he was familiar with this country, and that the villages around us contained his friends. We were not surprised, then, when we reached this one, to find Payeye huddled in the midst of the natives about a fire under a shelter hut, savagely munching sugar-cane. The reception we received was puzzling. Neither women nor children were in sight. The men ignored our presence, and did not look in our direction. No chief came out to tender us the embrace of friendship, neither were we offered any of the sugar-cane piled up at one side. The savages simply squatted about their fire in gloomy silence and displayed no interest in us, and Payeye did likewise.

We speedily discovered that the village would not do for a camp that night, even had we been inclined to remain in the face of the snub we had received. It was only a hamlet of half a dozen huts at best, and the hillocky ground inside the stockade was a quagmire. So we passed between the huts to the other gateway, and, leaving a policeman to guide the carriers

when they should arrive, trudged wearily on along the ridge in search of a bit of flat ground upon which to pitch our tents.

From a peak of the same ridge a mile away, a cluster of thatched roofs beckoned us. When we reached it, we found a large village, but deserted. There is little doubt that the unfriendly folk we had just left once had inhabited it, and that they had quit it for one of the countless trivial reasons which influence the acts of Papuans. Perhaps their numbers were too few to defend so large a place, perhaps some sorcerer had cursed it, perhaps it had sinister associations of which the natives did not wish to be constantly reminded. Whatever the reason, we were only too glad to find it, and the tents and swag-bags and food boxes which some thoughtful policeman had rushed to the head of the carriers' column received a cheer when they appeared.

It was customary for us to count noses each night, lest some carrier had been lost off during the day. We had no fear of a general attack, for there were many of us, but it is quite to be expected that hostile natives will slip along through the bush parallel with the trail and cut

off anyone who straggles out of the line. It can be done swiftly and so silently that no one knows it, even though it take place only a few yards away. A heavy spear flung suddenly from ambush, an arrow through the back, then the finishing blow with a wooden club and silence until the others have passed by.

This night we were one short. The missing one was Payeye. But no one worried over him, for where we last had seen him he appeared to be among friends. No doubt he would spend the night with them and turn up by the time we were ready to go on. If Fornier was at all upset, he did not show it. Like most natives, he accepted everything with equanimity.

If the village where we had left the boy had been silent when we passed through that afternoon, its men made up for it that night. For more than an hour they sang out excitedly from their eminence and were answered from all directions. None of us could understand their language, but the long-drawn-out "whoof, whoof," which seemed to end every exchange of words, had an exceedingly pregnant ring.

We were left in no doubt as to the significance

of the messages when we took the trail the next day, for the jungle on all sides of us seemed to be alive with natives. Front, rear and flank, they harassed us, never making a general attack or coming close enough to do any damage with their crude weapons or to compel us to fire upon them, but keeping up an incessant long-range, guerilla warfare which was nerve-wrecking.

Mystified by this sudden active hostility, we doubled our precautions to ensure safety. The police were distributed throughout the carriers, and Humphries and I, who ordinarily would have been taking turns about at the rear or the front, were up and down the line, seeing to it that the police kept alert and prevented straggling. No native was permitted behind the rear-guard at any time, and if one of us white men let it go past us for any reason, we made sure that at least one policeman was with us.

As usual, we left Downing to his own devices. He always was finding something at which to point a camera, and absorbed thus, seemed to forget the danger of becoming separated from the main body. Humphries had given him a body-guard—Kiai, a big rawboned chap but recently

recruited into the constabulary, and still untrained in his duties on patrol. But he could shoot, and that was the first requirement. It irritated Humphries, however, when he discovered that Downing and Kiai had let the rear-guard pass them on this particular day. He blew his whistle for the whole line to halt, and we sat down to wait until they caught up.

Then we heard some one come charging along the trail at breakneck speed, and Kiai burst into sight.

"*Taubada, taubada*," he gasped. "Mist' Downing fall down and break him one feller leg."

"And you come running back here to tell me instead of carrying him on your back," rasped Humphries. He seized the policeman by his shock of hair, whirled him around to face in the direction from which he had come, and shoved him. "I told you never to leave him, you *matamata* (greenhorn) policeman," he raged. "Get back to him in a hurry." And Kiai took the trail on winged feet.

For only an instant I hesitated before I followed. I heard Humphries yelling out orders to the police, then he, too, came along. As we

ran, through my brain was running a vision of what this meant. Days of carrying an injured man over trails that would make his suffering excruciating, days during which we must travel slowly among a hostile people, while we desperately strove to make our food last until we could reach a mission station near the coast, where medical attention was available.

Suddenly, from far down the trail, came the whip-like crack of a revolver !

CHAPTER XIV

"PURI-PURI" TO THE RESCUE

"MY God, he's killed himself," gasped Humphries at my back. The same thought had flashed across my own mind, for I recalled how only a few hours before we had been discussing the possibility of this very thing, and the remark that suicide was about the sporting way out. Downing might have pondered over that after his accident, and to have carried out the suggestion on the impulse of the moment.

But when we caught up with Kiai, he was aimlessly circling about on the trail and Downing was nowhere in sight. Kiai pointed out the hole among the moss-covered roots where Downing had broken through, and the crushed undergrowth where he had lain after ordering the constable to catch us and send back help.

"I'll tear the uniform off you for this," Humphries burst out, and punctuated his tirade

with language I never had heard him use before. He wound up by ordering the constable to keep up a search near by and turned to me. "This looks bad," he said, and remembering the savages who had been stalking us all day, I nodded. "He couldn't have got far with a broken leg—if he wanted to," he went on. "If he had decided to move, it would have been along the trail in our direction, and he certainly didn't come that way."

Every moment that we remained there our own danger increased, but we could not leave until we had satisfied ourselves that neither Downing alive nor his dead body was anywhere about. Finally we came back to the only theory that would hold water. He had been carried away by the savages, and there was nothing we could do. We didn't know where to look for him even.

At the moment we turned to go back, a heavy pig spear hurtled past our heads and stuck, quivering in the ground beyond us, and the trail, until then empty and silent, suddenly filled with naked, black bodies running toward us with weapons in their hands, and their voices raised

in the piercing cry of the cannibal when meat is at hand.

In the same instant that we began a heart-breaking flight up the trail, I saw a thin, black body come shooting down the trunk of a near-by tree, and laughter, shrill and mocking, rose high above the din of our pursuers. Even had I not seen him, I would have recognized Payeye's voice.

In spite of our handicap of heavy boots, we won the race, and the savages scattered when the police fired a few shots over their heads. I was determined to start pursuit at once in the hope of rescuing Downing or recovering his body, but Humphries made me listen to reason.

“By now he's beyond any help we can give him,” he said, catching my arm, “even if we knew where to look. No, it's a much longer job than that. Naturally, his death must not go unavenged, but it will take months. We must hurry back to the coast, arrange for food supplies to be kept coming up to us until our task is done, get more police so we can divide into two small parties, and use prisoners from the Kairuku jail as carriers. Our party is too big, too unwieldy,

to accomplish anything immediately. When McIntosh, the prospector, was killed, it took eighteen months of patrolling the district, raiding gardens, occupying villages, chasing the natives from hiding-place to hiding-place, to make them surrender the guilty men. I fancy we'll have the same kind of a task, with one exception. We have one definite clue—Payeye. Find that little cannibal and we'll at least know where to begin. But that is a man's sized job in these mountains, if he doesn't want to be found. However, there is one thing in our favour. No mountain native will leave his own particular district for fear of his enemies. Once Payeye is on the run, it is only a question of time until he will be caught. Then——"

Humphries' grim look boded ill for the boy if ever he fell into the magistrate's clutches.

With that I was forced to be content, but inwardly I was seething because of the necessary delay.

Although we realized it was wellnigh useless, we sent the corporal and several policemen out to scout around on the back trail, while we moved on to a clearing in the forest, and pitched

camp. An Australian aboriginal or an American Indian, both of them among the best trackers in the world, probably would have found enough signs to have led him straight to whatever place Downing's captors had taken him. But a Papuan is no woodsman. He can follow a well-defined trail, but he has little sense of direction. We were neither surprised nor disappointed, then, when the corporal and his men returned about nightfall with nothing to report.

About our camp fire that night we reluctantly decided to abandon the search, push on into unexplored country, and swing across it in a half-circle that would land us at an inland mission station from which we could send a runner to Port Moresby with a message that would start the wheels of government moving on the preliminary plans for a punitive expedition. We slept but little, although there was no danger to ourselves. New Guinea natives are afraid of the dark, and do not move around after night unless they have torches to light their way.

Noon the next day found us halted in the bed of a creek. We had not seen a hostile all day. Bitterly we accounted for this by our

belief that the savages had satisfied their craving for flesh and did not care to follow us any farther. Nevertheless we took no chances. Sentinels were posted in the jungle on all sides of us, while our food was cooked and eaten. Then, because we were too restless to smoke and relax, Humphries and I got up and joined the policemen we had left two hundred yards back along the trail by which we had come. We approached them quietly, for they were in a listening attitude and held their rifles at the ready.

“*Daka?*” questioned Humphries sharply. (“What is it?”)

“*Boiboi, taubada,*” one of them whispered back. (“A noise, master.”)

Then we, too, heard what their keener ears had discerned first, the hum of human voices, rapidly drawing close. Apparently whoever was approaching was making no effort to conceal the fact, and we probably would have stayed where we were and met them face to face but for one thing—Payeye’s unmistakable shrill laughter ringing out among the trees.

Humphries clutched my arm and, followed by the policemen, we dashed back to the creek. A

whistle brought in the other sentinels, a few low orders sent the carriers scuttling out of sight into the bush with their loads, a well-directed kick or two scattered the last smouldering embers of the cooking fire into the waters of the creek. Then the police and ourselves dropped behind boulders where our weapons commanded the opposite bank at the spot where the trail descended it.

The last wisp of smoke floated away on the breeze, and the pink and white cockatoos ceased their fluttering above the tree-tops, when they could see us no longer. There were no sounds except those of the water gurgling over the stones in the creek and the souging of the wind through the branches. Our trap was laid and the curtain was about to rise on the first act of our drama of vengeance.

A huge man whose matted hair was shot through and through with the feathers which bespeak the killer was the first to emerge on the opposite bank. He paused to scan the creek in both directions, and the point of the great spear which he carried followed the line taken by his eyes. A clever woodsman would have

seen enough in that one sweeping glance to have warned him that danger lurked near. But the big man was deceived, and he turned and spoke to those at his back whom we could not see, and himself descended to the creek.

Two others followed him out of the jungle almost immediately, and hard on their heels came Payeye—and he wore the feathers of the man who has killed! I raised my revolver and pointed it at his black body just above the heart, forgetting that Payeye alive was worth a great deal more to us than Payeye dead, and remembering only that Downing was gone and this little viper was responsible.

Then the weapon dropped from my hand and clattered to the ground as I sprang to my feet with a whoop of joy. Humphries dragged me down behind the boulder again just in time, for the big man, startled by my unexpected appearance, had hurled his spear at me. But a little thing like that didn't bother me then, for behind Payeye I had seen Downing, limping painfully, and supported on either side by a naked savage, but undeniably alive.

Then Payeye leaped down the bank to the side

of his fellows in the creek and harangued them, and I heard Downing calling: “It’s all right, old dears. Come on out and meet Payeye’s friends.”

We came, but warily, and it was not until the big man advanced and embraced each of us in turn that we felt at ease. Then we fell upon Downing, come back to us as from the dead, and wrung his hand and pounded him between the shoulders until he begged for mercy and a place to sit down. He seemed to enjoy keeping us in suspense, and refused to tell us what had happened to him until we had opened up a food box and put the tea “billy” on to boil.

“Last night,” he said, between mouthfuls of a corned beef sandwich, “I could have had meat to eat, but I got to thinking that it might be a bit of one of you chaps, and I refrained. I think those fellows there,” waving a hand toward the men who had brought him back to us, “had ‘long pig’ all right. They seemed to be barbecuing something in the village where we spent the night. Anyhow, I’m glad it was not me. It might have been but for Payeye.

“When I dropped behind yesterday to take a

picture of some mountains through an open space in the trees, I wasn't watching where I stepped and I broke through the moss between some roots just off the trail and gave my leg a wrench. I told Kiai to catch you and bring some one to help carry me. He had no sooner left than Payeye came along. For a minute I thought he was going to jab me with a spear he was carrying, and, remembering those feathers he wants to wear so much, I confess I shuddered. I yanked out my revolver and fired it in the air. Then all of a sudden there was a lot of niggers about us and I figured it was all up with me.

"But Payeye got in front of me and made them a speech, and a different sort of look came over their faces, something respectful and with a little bit of fear in it. Then they picked me up and some of them carried me off down the trail between them, while Payeye and the others stayed behind.

"They caught up to us again after awhile and we went on to a village. They dumped me in a smelly old hut and built a fire outside and stayed around it far into the night, arguing about something. I crawled over to the door once

and peeped out, and Payeye seemed to be having a lot to say. Whatever it was, he must have had his way about it, for pretty soon they quieted down and he came into the hut where I was. He can't talk any lingo I can understand, but he patted my hand as if to reassure me, then he laid down on the ground and went to sleep. I dropped off myself, and the next thing I knew he was tugging at my arm and dawn was just breaking. I got up and found I could walk by holding on to things. Then about a dozen men, the fellows over there, gathered around and started away with me, they taking turns at holding me up on either side.

“ I hadn't the slightest idea where they were taking me, although Payeye kept jabbering away and laughing as if it was all right. Then we got here and found you—and please pass over some more food. A couple of sweet potatoes roasted in the fire was all the breakfast I had.”

“ It's the most extraordinary thing I ever heard,” Humphries spoke up after a bit. “ I wonder what made Payeye stand up for you and save your life. Why, man alive, he's as much a cannibal as any of them, and he could have

had human flesh and won his manhood rights all at the same time by killing you when he found you helpless there on the trail. I can't understand it."

Then Downing voiced the theory he had held all along.

"Gratitude, that's it," he said. "I was good to the boy, and when he had a chance to repay me by saving my life, he did it, that's all. Another cup of tea, please."

Humphries snorted.

"Gratitude!—Rot!" he replied. "Here, we'll see what he has to say about it. Payeye!"

The boy, chewing betel-nut with his fellows, got up and came over to us. He was his old silent, almost sullen, self again, and plainly he didn't relish our company any more than he ever had.

"Fornier," said Humphries, in Motuan, "you talk to him. Ask him why he didn't kill Mr. Downing. Ask him if his belly was sore for the white man," which is the way in which the Papuan describes sympathy.

For several minutes Fornier and the boy talked in the Mekeo tongue, which they used to each

other. Then the old constable turned apologetically to us.

“ Masters,” he said, “ the boy is young and he is a fool. He says his belly is never sore for anybody. He says he did not try to kill Mr. Downing or let his friends try to kill him because the white man knows too much and is a great sorcerer. And Payeye was afraid that Mr. Downing would not die but would point the black box at him and use ‘ puri-puri ’ (magic) and put a spell on him.”

Thrilling as it was, the incident was quickly forgotten, for Payeye’s friends went on with us and that night, in the village to which they led us, we learned that just across the valley was Kapatea—and Yapitze.

Over our camp fire, by means of a string of interpreters, we learned the story of that mysterious outbreak in Kapatea.

CHAPTER XV

WHY KAPATEA " WENT WILD " .

IT was a pig that started the district of Kapatea on a rampage, said our hosts—a long-snouted, razor-backed pig. It had wandered away from the village of Tavivi and died at the foot of a precipice overlooking the boulder-studded little stream which separates Kapatea from Kevezzi, the district to the north. When the pig's owner found the carcass he became exceedingly " wild " and hired a sorcerer to discover who had killed the brute.

There wasn't anything to indicate that anyone had done the pig to death. In fact, it is quite likely that it had slipped off the steep mountainside by accident. But, like all mountain folk, its owner did not believe in accidents or death from natural causes. To him there could be one cause—sorcery. And there is but one way to fight sorcery, according to his ideas, and that was to use more sorcery.

The man of magic whom he retained gazed long and pensively at the pig's carcass, scraped off a few bristles from its back and retired to the seclusion of his squalid hut in the village. There he mixed the bristles with some jimcracks of his own—a few round, smooth stones; a cockatoo feather or two, some evil-smelling leaves and a small human bone—and sealed them up with mud in a joint of green bamboo. He laid the bamboo upon a tiny fire and for the rest of the day squatted over it, muttering incantations that were most impressive to the pig's owner, nervously pacing up and down in front of the sorcerer's hut.

Finally the sorcerer called and beckoned him in. He leaned through the low doorway, dangling from his hand a netted bag of pliant vines in which he carried the sweet potatoes and sugarcane he had promised as a fee. The sorcerer cast an appraising eye over the raw food before he whispered to his client that the pig had died as the result of the machinations of the chief sorcerer of Kevezzi district. Thus he accomplished two things at the same time, satisfied his employer and vented his envy and jealousy of his rival.

The owner of the pig, catapulting out of the hut, howled out the information the sorcerer had imparted to him. He found it ridiculously easy to inflame the passions of his fellows against the people of Kevezzi. Between the two districts bad blood of a sort already existed, but it had been revealed only by sporadic clashes in which no one had been killed. This matter of the killing of the pig was a different thing, however. True, only the sorcerer of Kevezzi was accused, but his people shared the responsibility with him. If the sorcerer did not pay the penalty with his own life, he would suffer far more by having his relatives slain.

So Kapatea went mad—stark, raving mad—and prepared to avenge the pig's death by making war on Kevezzi. Kapatea's chief did not share the madness of his people. Papuan memory is notoriously short, but the chief had not forgotten the last time that Kapatea had gone on a rampage. The white man, three of him, and his black devils of the police had taken a hand. They had established outposts in the district and punished Kapatea severely, hunting the people out of their hiding-places, razing their

villages and uprooting their gardens and killing them with sticks that belched fire until, in desperation, they had surrendered and promised to be good. The chief's son had been one of those who had been taken away as ringleaders, and he had not come back. So the chief had no stomach for similar punishment.

In every such situation, be it among civilized races or among savages, a leader willing to do the bidding of the people is ever to be found. Kapatea found such a man in Yapitze of Tavivi village. And what a leader ! Although he could not strip the old chief of his hereditary title, Yapitze usurped all of its powers and became chief in fact. Speedily he assembled his forces and crossed the river into Kevezzi. There he abandoned the skulking warfare and ambushes which characterize New Guinea fighting and attacked in the open. He compelled his warriors to travel in the night, in spite of their fear of evil spirits of darkness and against all the ethics and rules of their people, and fell on the Kevezzi folk at dawn and routed them. Speedily the villages of Kevezzi, dotting the grass-covered spurs of the mountains, were bathed in blood.

Wrecked huts and pillaged gardens marked the trail of the invaders and their triumphant cries and songs, shouted out from the peaks upon which they camped, testified daily to cannibalistic orgies over the bodies of Kevezzi's dead, while the terror-stricken survivors fled into the jungle and hid in its fastnesses.

For miles around the mountain folk were not slow in learning even the most minute details of what was happening—from the boastful, taunting cries of the Kapateans hurled across the chasms to friend and foe alike; from the piteous pleas of the Kevezziites that those tribes friendly to them come and help them drive out the enemy. The non-combatants passed the news on to those tribes behind them that could not hear for themselves and thus, by “bush telegraph,” word of the uprising gradually trickled down into the foothills, then into the plains of Mekeo and, eventually, to the coast and into the ears of Magistrate Connelley at Kairuku, through the village constable we had seen there.

The next day we stood knee-deep in the saw-edged grass which lines the slope upon which the village of Popoliata is built and gazed across

the valley into Kapatea. Upon the opposite slope stood two hundred or more Kapateans and our field-glasses told us that they were mostly men, with a few youths mixed in. Neither women nor children were to be seen and the men and boys were armed. Even at that distance we could distinguish bows, spears and clubs.

The party was sitting upon the boulders which lined the crest of their ridge. Apparently there was no excitement, no loud yelling across the valley to Popoliata, although we knew that their keen eyes, trained to see across great distances, already had taken stock of our forces. Was it a trap into which they wished to lead the expedition by baiting it with seeming indifference toward the white man? Suddenly Humphries recalled that a constable had boasted he could speak the Kapatean tongue and called him.

"They say come on and no be afraid," Maikeli said in the English upon which he prided himself. For fully fifteen minutes he had sung out across the chasm to the Kapateans and had listened to the bellowed replies. After that invitation—or was it a challenge?—Humphries could do nothing but go ahead. If he held back now, he knew

government fear and white man's prestige would vanish in Kapatea. Yet if he went ahead what assurance did he have that when we started up the opposite slope, clinging like flies to its steep side, the Kapateans would not shove those boulders over the edge and the huge rocks, hurtling down at tremendous speed, would not wipe out all of us?

Once we had scrambled down the Popoliata side and begun the Kapatea ascent, the police ascended warily in the lead. It was only by exerting every ounce of strength, digging fingers and toes into crevices and grasping every root, every tuft of grass that offered a handhold, that we climbed at all. Our rifles we left swung upon our backs. Against those juggernaut boulders, once they came, rifles were of no use. If the Kapateans began hostilities only a miracle could save any of us, but the police did not falter. Steadily, up, up, up they went.

The Kapateans had moved to the edge of their ridge where they could peer down upon us labouring below. But they did not sing out or laugh or display excitement. A hundred yards from the top we paused to catch our breath and wait

for the carriers, manfully struggling with their loads, to reach us.

Suddenly there was a movement among the savages on top of the ridge. Instinctively the police reached for their rifles. "Steady," called Humphries sharply and the police dropped back into more comfortable positions and calmly awaited whatever fate had in store for them.

But there was no attack. The group above merely was parting to let two men pass through it.

One was a gigantic specimen of manhood with great bulging muscles that rippled under his ebony skin, naked except for the breech-clout made of the soft inner fibre of the tapa tree. His shoulders were erect and thrown back in striking contrast to the rounded stoop of the average mountaineer. Upon his head he wore a gaudy head-dress of cockatoo feathers, interlaced with his heavy hair, the insignia of the man who has killed. Only one of tremendous strength could have bent the bow he carried or hurled his heavy spear. His eyes as he approached were haughty and insolent and his air almost regal.

Limping at his heels was a miserable little

individual, whose shortcomings suffered all the more by comparison with his companion. He could not have been more than five and a half feet tall; he was thin, and on his legs were unhealed sores that seemed to pain him extremely. His egg-shaped head was covered with tightly plaited hair, but unadorned, and the eyes under a rather high forehead were weak and watery.

The big man pushed through the police, ignoring them as if they did not exist, and came directly to the magistrate. In the manner of white men, with whom he must have come in contact at some past date, he held out his hand in greeting and did not proffer the embrace with which mountain savages greet welcome guests.

Then, thumping his chest with his closed fists, he announced his own identity: "Aihi-Oai" and with a careless wave of the hand seemed to introduce his insignificant companion. The magistrate, reaching to take the flaccid hand which the little man extended, was surprised to hear himself addressed in Motuan.

"Chief Aihi-Oai bids you welcome, master," he said. "I am Muria," he added as if it didn't matter.

"But you speak Motuan," exclaimed Humphries in that tongue. Motuan is a coastal dialect, used by white men in New Guinea in addressing those blacks with whom they come in frequent contact and the official native language of the government. That a mountain man should know it at all was remarkable. That he should remember it when it seemed certain he could not have heard it recently was even more so.

"I was in Hanuabada (Port Moresby) jail for many moons," was the reply. That explained then his knowledge of Motuan. When a prisoner has served his term the government makes it a point to repatriate him in his own village. We felt that once more fortune had favoured us. Muria's unexpected ability to remember Motuan had given us a valuable ally in the task ahead.

We forbore to ask further questions then. Already the rumble of thunder among the mist-encircled peaks, warned that a storm was coming and Humphries announced his intention of hurrying to the nearest village and making camp. Muria nodded, spoke briefly to the chief and led the way to the top and along the narrow ridge,

while Aihi-Oai barked out a command which sent his warriors leaping down the slope to help the weary carriers.

In a cleared space between the village huts poles already had been put into place for the erection of flies, large joints of bamboo containing fresh water were waiting and at half a dozen fires sweet potatoes were cooking. We noted these preparations for the camp of a white man with gratification. As much as anything else it told us that this village, at least, did not fear our arrival and we reasonably might expect its help. But Humphries shook his head, puzzled that anywhere in Kapatea, its hands dripping with blood, a government face should be welcome.

That night, after the storm had passed, he sat beside his camp fire and sought to unravel the thing by questioning Muria, while Chief Aihi-Oai sat by with his men and listened. Occasionally Muria translated for the benefit of his fellows and their grins indicated their approval of what he said.

Muria, it developed, had been jailed for participation in the troubles which had brought a previous punitive patrol into Kapatea. We

thought then that we understood why this weak, insignificant little man had been one of those delivered up by his tribe as the murderer. Of no value as a warrior, he had been sacrificed in place of a more valiant man whose prowess would be missed.

"Muria," Humphries asked, "you know why I am here?"

"Yes, master," was the ready reply, "it is fashion govamen' walkabout seeing what the villages are doing."

"Kapatea" said Humphries sternly, "has been making war on Kevezzi. The govamen' has gone very wild."

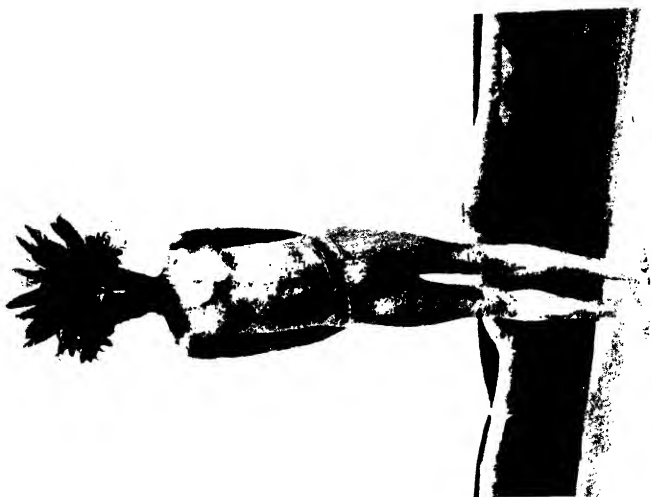
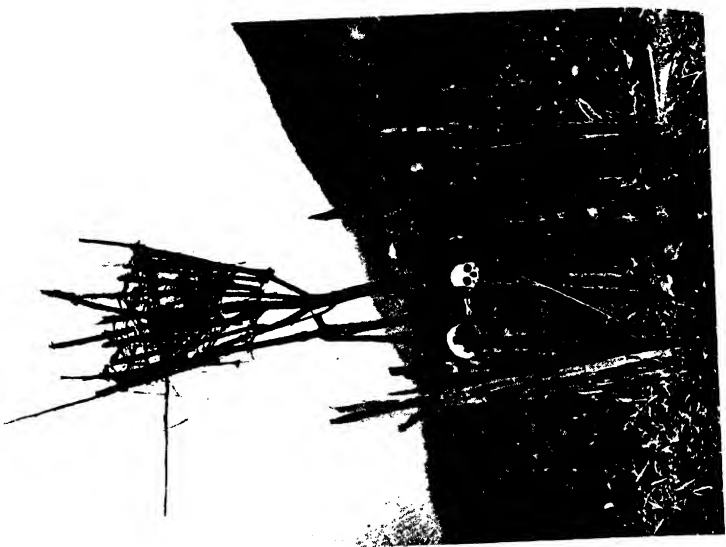
There was surprise in the eyes of the little cannibal. "Kevezzi killed a pig belonging to Kapatea and Kapatea paid back," he said. To him this was a clinching argument that justified everything.

"I know all about the pig, but the govamen' does not permit paybacks." The magistrate did not try to dispute the justice of Kapatea's claim. Belief that a pig is sacred to its owner has been a part of the mountain code too long to be shattered at one blow. It is a thing to be corrected

by long and patient education, and the arrest and punishment of the ringleaders of the fighting in Kevezzi was the first step.

Adroitly the white man led Muria then to recite the details of the death of the pig and the vengeance of Kapatea. "But it is over now, master," he said. "Kapatea's people have gone to their villages again."

"It will not be over until the handcuffs are on the man who led the payback," retorted Humphries grimly. "Where is Yapitze?"



CHAPTER XVI

TREACHERY !

NOT a ripple of excitement was manifest among the savages around the camp fire, although they could not have missed the magistrate's enunciation, for the first time, of the name of the man we had come to get.

"One does not speak the name of the dead, master," said Muria after a bit, a hint of reproof in his tone as he mentioned an ancient taboo. "Perhaps you did not know. The man of whom you speak is dead."

Yapitze dead ?

It was hard to believe. Not the slightest hint of it had reached our ears, not even at Popoliata, and this in a country where for miles around the people are familiar with the most intimate details of the lives of their neighbours. Still, the taboo on a dead man's name might have kept the fact of Yapitze's death from us.

"He was ambushed and killed with a spear, master," went on Muria in reply to the questions hurled at him. "No, it was not the people of Kevezzi who slew him, but a man from his own village of Tavivi, who envied his great strength and desired it for himself." That, too, is a mountain belief, that a slain man's virtues pass to the slayer.

So, with their leader slain, the people of Kapatea apparently had ended their bloody warfare and returned home! That was why they had no fear of the govamen' and the police, who always demanded the leader be given up for punishment. How could they deliver up some one who had passed out? That was the way the black mind would reason.

"The slayer?" the magistrate demanded. "The people of Tavivi, this man's relatives, they have not paid back?"

"No, master, they have not paid back. The man who killed him fled, where they do not know. Too it will take much sorcery to overcome him, for have not the strength and virtues he envied in the other passed into his own body now?" The magistrate did not try to dispute it. If

Muria told the truth, if this yarn of Yapitze's death was not all a concoction to throw us off the trail and save the man who had usurped the rights of Kapatea's chief, we would find proof of it in the dead leader's village.

"The one of whom you speak was buried?" he asked, and Muria replied in the affirmative. The body, he said, even then rested upon the high platform of sticks upon which the mountain folk place their dead until only the skeleton remains.

"Very well," said Humphries, rising to signify the interview was ended, "to-morrow I start for Tavivi—and you shall lead me."

"Tavivi! No, master, I do not go to Tavivi." The protest was wrung from Muria's lips and he gazed pleadingly at the white man. "I have nothing to do with Tavivi, master. I do not know the way."

"Tavivi is in Kapatea," insisted the magistrate. "Surely you visit a village of your own tribe."

But Muria did not answer. He had turned to Chief Aihi-Oai and was talking rapidly and earnestly with him. Apparently he was passing

on the request and the chief was vetoing it. Watching their faces it could be seen that in some way fear was the reason for the refusal. In one's heart he could not blame them.

From the pigeon-holes of memory came forth snatches of government reports we had read. "Tavivi, the place where the natives said many had been killed and eaten." "The patrol found it impossible to go forward because of the fierce opposition of the people of Tavivi." "The natives say the people of Tavivi slew and ate six men in one night." A bad place, this village Tavivi, quite the spot which would give birth to a fiend like Yapitze had been. It would not lightly forgive the man who led it now into the hands of the govamen', in view of its part in the recent warfare. He would be a marked man, this guide, once the protecting police had gone.

Still, Humphries did not propose to let the possibility of this stand in the way of carrying out his plan. "We start for Tavivi to-morrow," he said again, and dismissed them with the Motuan good-night, "*Bamahuta.*"

They went then reluctantly, it seemed, and

far into the night we could hear their voices in loud and passionate discussion. Aihi-Oai seemed to be taking the lead and his deep tones penetrated beyond the hut in which the men had assembled and sounded distinctly in our ear. Quietly Humphries quitted his cot and summoned the sentinel, pacing steadily up and down near his tent, and ordered the constable who knew the Kapatea tongue to be sent to him at once.

He came along presently, his fatigue uniform of white calico a spot against the background of night.

"What these men talk?" asked the magistrate when he saw the constable in the entrance to the fly. The man listened intently. "They talk who guide you to Tavivi," he said at last, but could add no more.

"They savee you talk Kapatea?"

"No, master."

"Then they no must savee. You listen what talk they make, tell me, all time. Understand?"

"Yes, master."

"Then go back to sleep." The constable saluted stiffly and departed.

In the grey dawn the sentinel aroused us. Already the mountain men in their huts were astir and we saw Muria emerge, gnawing at a cold baked sweet potato. Humphries had feared that the little savage would slip away to get out of the task demanded of him, but Muria squatted down not far away from the fly. He did not approach it until we had eaten our own breakfast. Then :

“*Taubada*,” Muria called, and when he had received the nod which permitted him to draw near, he continued in Motuan, “you will be guided to Tavivi.” There was a sinister look in those watery eyes and it was a relief to remember those secret instructions to the constable the night before to keep his ears open and his mouth shut. Humphries took occasion to pass the word to all the police to be on their guard against treachery.

Finally he gave the order to start. The warriors followed to the gate of the village and stopped there. Apparently they would go no farther. Only Muria and the big chief passed on to the head of the line. Humphries and the rear-guard were the last to leave. A man stepped

up and held open his arms to the magistrate. Surprised as he was, he stepped into the embrace and returned it in kind, although he was puzzled.

Only a chief embraces the arriving or departing guest. This man who had bade him farewell, then, must be the chief of the village we had just quitted. We had thought Aihi-Oai was that. We must have been mistaken. Who, then, was Aihi-Oai, that these men paid him such deference, even to the extent that their chief would submerge his own rights in favour of the big man ? Only when it had come to saying farewell had the village chief made his identity known, and then possibly because Aihi-Oai could not very well say good-bye to those whom he himself was accompanying. Humphries told us about it when we paused to rest.

Muria, when the puzzle was put to him, said that the big man was a "number one chief" in Kapatea, but failed utterly in his efforts to make clear just what constituted the difference between the head of a village and a "number one." Apparently his command of the Motuan dialect was not sufficient to enable him to explain the

maze of heredity and precedents by which Aihi-Oai received his title. So we let it go at that, uncertain whether Muria couldn't tell or wouldn't.

So we white men, the police and the carriers tagged along at the heels of the big savage and his little henchman over trails that were excellent as far as Papuan trails go. This went far to convince the magistrate that we were being guided aright. No mountain man will show his best trails to a stranger unless he is positive of that stranger's friendship, lest the knowledge of them get to his enemies and give them an advantage.

Occasionally we came to a village and were received by the people quietly and with apparent friendship, but it was to the "number one chief" and his diminutive companion, always at his heels or elbow, that the natives paid deference. In these villages we found newly erected burial platforms on poles, twenty feet above the ground, and cramped into the pens on them could be seen human bodies whose bulk proved they had been men. It was evident that Kapatea had not gone unscathed in its clash with Kevezzi.

With Muria acting as interpreter, the magistrate asked many questions in these villages and always the replies were identical. Here and there, perhaps, a detail was added or one left out, but in the main they agreed. Always Humphries made a demand for the leader of the recent outbreak, but bowed to the native taboo by refraining from mentioning the name of Yapitze. Always the natives understood and told him the man we sought was dead and "buried" in Tavivi.

At these conferences Constable Maikeli stood close, his face inscrutable as he listened keenly and never by so much as the flicker of an eyelash betraying that he understood what was being said. Plainly neither Chief Aihi-Oai nor Muria remembered that one of us had sung out to them in their own language from the cliffs of Popoliata and received their invitation to the white man to come ahead and not be afraid.

If Humphries had hoped through the constable to discover trickery on the part of his guides or the people of Kapatea he was disappointed. Muria, so Maikeli said, was translating truly and had made no effort to influence the replies.

It was all very open and above-board on the face of things, and it was for this very reason that the magistrate worried. Like most savage peoples, Papuans are keen to please those who question them and always try to say what they think the questioner wants them to say. So if you ask two men identical questions and one does not hear the answers of the other, he is quite likely to say something entirely different. When you hear any number of them agreeing on anything, even down to details, it is most suspicious.

Yet here was an entire tribe agreeing that Kapatea and Kevezzi were at peace, that their late leader was dead. Bit by bit Humphries became convinced that, if he could but uncover it, we were being made the victim of a plot or a hoax. He was more certain of it than ever when, lurking on the outskirts of a crowd in one hamlet, his eyes saw and recognized a man whom he had seen in another village two days before. It was not logical that he should have come there alone and not have joined the magistrate's party.

It had been four days now since Aihi-Oai and

Muria had undertaken to guide us to Tavivi and in that time they should have reached any point in Kapatea. No native district is so large that it could not be spanned in that time. Humphries asked Muria about it.

"To-morrow," said the little guide, pointing to the zenith, "to-morrow when sun is on top we reach Tavivi."

But at noon the next day we still were battling our way across the jungle-clad mountains and some one, accidentally glancing at his compass, discovered that we were heading south-west, instead of the north-east which we desired to go. We had turned around and were returning whence we had come !

We were just then halted in a tiny village which, from the newness of the half-completed huts, we judged to be a new site. Evidently we had interrupted the builders at their work, for in the soft earth there were fresh footprints.

Upon a log to one side sat Muria and Chief Aihi-Oai, peeling sugar-cane with their sharp teeth and stuffing their mouths with the juicy heart. Between bites they exchanged short words in a low tone. Humphries' eyes strayed

in that direction and for a moment he regarded them contemplatively.

Then he jumped to his feet.

“That little savage is tricking us,” he said with a dangerous gleam in his eyes. “I’m going over to have it out with him.”

CHAPTER XVII

TAVIVI

MURIA slowly got to his feet as Humphries strode over to him.

"Muria," snapped the magistrate in Motuan, "you lead us wrong."

The little cannibal's hands went out in apologetic protest

"Master, I do the best I can," he replied. "I seek Tavivi."

"Seek Tavivi," echoed Humphries. "Why should you seek Tavivi? It is in Kapatea and you belong to Kapatea. You have no need to seek a village in your own district."

Muria flashed him an ingratiating, appealing smile. "You do not know Kapatea, master," he said meekly. "It is big. Even I am lost. I cannot find Tavivi."

He glanced at us craftily to see if the lie went down. For his words were false. No mountain

Papuan becomes lost in his own district which he has roamed from childhood. Even conceiving that Muria actually had lost his bearings, it was impossible that the same thing should have happened to Chief Aihi-Oai at the same time. No, the thing was deeper than that, much deeper. We were being led astray deliberately for some purpose.

Humphries' hand flashed out and laid tight hold upon the shoulder of the little guide, and whirled him about.

"You dog, you rat," he stormed, using the epithets he knew were most calculated to arouse the other. "You speak lies." Then he brought the palm of his hand down sharply across the cheek of the black man, brought it back and slapped his other cheek with a back-handed motion.

Muria started back and his weak little eyes flamed hatred and vindictiveness. Then the tears began to fall, the blood ran from his distended nostrils and he crumpled up, sobbing and grovelling, at our feet.

"*Taubada*," he cried, "I do not know where Tavivi is."

Humphries signalled to the nearest constable. "Put the handcuffs on him," he ordered, and Muria was jerked to his feet and the irons fastened to his wrists.

"And the other, master?" inquired the constable.

Aihî-Oai had sprung to his feet and was gazing at us with mingled rage and amazement. His gigantic spear was clutched in his hand as if he were of a mind to take the part of his little comrade. Humphries hesitated. It was easy to see what was running through his mind. The big man evidently was a person of some importance in Kapatea, a number-one chief we had been told. He had made us welcome to the district, thus vouching for us and affording us a measure of safety. If we repaid him by making him a prisoner, would we be inviting an attack from his people, who might logically attempt his rescue? On the other hand, it might have the opposite effect—enhance our prestige as men who did not fear even a number-one chief and make it easy for us to go where we willed.

"What do you think?" he asked. "I've got to act quickly."

There was no need for us to make a decision. Chief Aihi-Oai did that. Almost as if he had understood the question, he spun around in his tracks, leaped over the log upon which he had sat and dashed for the protecting jungle.

Two constables were after him instantly, but they went no farther than the fringe of the forest. Humphries had not ordered them to fire at the fleeing chief, and they realized how useless it would be to try and run down a mountaineer in his native haunts.

"That settles it," said Humphries despondently. "If we weren't already in the stew up to our necks, we'd be now. We'll have all the savages in Kapatea howling around us within a few hours. I wonder if we can make this rabbit," he indicated Muria with a nod, "lead us on to Tavivi."

"I think he knows where it is," I said confidently. "But why has he been leading us on a wild-goose chase in the first place?"

"Two things suggest themselves," replied the magistrate. "One is that we are being worn out and our supplies diminished, so that either we'll quit the district or fall easy victims to an



THE BAMBOO PIPE



A CANNIBAL HUT

ambush when they get ready to spring it. The other is that Yapitze is not dead at all and that Muria and the chief fear him too much to lead us into his stronghold, because he might make them pay for it later."

He turned back to Muria. "You'll lead us to Tavivi or I'll take you down to the coast and put you in jail. Perhaps I'll kill you," he threatened untruthfully.

Muria began to howl. "No, master," he pleaded. "Not Tavivi."

"Tavivi or jail," insisted Humphries.

"The men of Tavivi are bad, master. They will kill me."

"The govamen' will protect you."

Suddenly Muria ceased to dab at the mingled blood and tears upon his face and his hand strayed to the little netted bag which dangled from his neck. A cunning look came into his face and I, for one, would have given a great deal to know what was passing through his mind.

"It is well, master?" he said. "We go to Tavivi."

Humphries nodded. Then he called a constable. From one of the packs a rope was

obtained and knotted firmly to the chain connecting the handcuffs on the guide's wrists. The other end of the rope was looped about the constable's waist with about six feet between the two men.

"Now understand me, Muria," said Humphries. "If you try to run, the constable will kill you. If we are attacked some of us may die, but you will die first. Do you understand? Lead us right and when we reach Tavivi you will be free."

That he knew the way speedily become apparent. Left to ourselves, we probably would have taken a trail that led north-east along the ridge out of the village. But Muria, with the vanguard, turned sharply downhill and indicated a small pad that no one would have suspected was there, so well was it concealed.

It really was my turn to be at the head of the party, but when Humphries struck out with the leading police I turned to the task of getting the carriers under way quickly and seeing that no load was left behind.

In spite of my watchfulness, however, the last of the carriers was under way when I discovered

a fifty-pound mat of rice had been overlooked. Angrily I bent over, picking up one end while Constable Dengo reached for the other. Until we could catch up and find the carrier to whom it belonged we would have to carry it between us.

At that instant there was a whishing sound, and as I instinctively leaped back an arrow buried itself in the mat of rice. My startled eyes rested for an instant upon the glowering face of old Aihi-Oai peering out at me from the underbrush near by, then he was swallowed up by the jungle. Dengo and I seized the rice, plucked out the arrow and trotted after the carriers. From the jungle burst a chorus of disappointed yells, and I shuddered. A few inches' difference in the trajectory of that arrow and it would have pierced me through. Apparently all the time we had been in the village its people had lain hidden in the undergrowth near by.

That night we threw up our camp at the very brink of a steep precipice so that from one side no attack was possible. On the others we stationed a double guard. Walking around for a final inspection of the sentinels before I sought my cot, I peeped into the police tent.

Muria still wore the handcuffs and around his thin ankles some one had snapped another pair. The rope still bound him to one constable, and another rope, tied to the chain of the irons upon his legs, was securely fastened to the corporal himself. Only a Houdini could have made his escape.

Along late in the next afternoon the trail we were following widened suddenly and we knew that we were close to a village. Ordinarily we would have thrown out scouts and entered it boldly. It was a certainty that our approach was known, that sentinels had withdrawn along the very trail upon which we stood. Yet no excited chatter came from the bend ahead, no barking of dogs, no sign of excitement. The village had been deserted as we neared it and our straining ears heard nothing to break the ominous silence.

I glanced at Muria, standing passively in the trail. His wide-opened eyes, his dilated nostrils told me that some strong emotion was at work inwardly. Abruptly Humphries came up from the rear, called two policemen to his side and pulled his revolver from its holster.

The gate in the village stockade when we reached it stood invitingly open. We walked up to it slowly and looked inside. The village was unusually large and, flanking the wide central street, were thirty or forty staunchly built huts. But not a living thing was in sight.

Cautiously we shepherded our entire party inside and lined it up against the stockade where the carriers' backs would be protected if it came to a fight. The police stationed themselves at intervals in front.

"Muria, what village is this?" asked Humphries.

"Master," came the reply in a voice in which pride was noticeable, "this is my proper village."

"Your own village, eh? What village is that?"

"Master, this is Tavivi."

We stared at the little cannibal unbelievably. If he belonged here why had he been so opposed to bringing us to it? If, as he had insisted, Yapitze was dead and Kapatea at peace, what possible reason could he have for fearing to let us visit it?

"Where is the body of the dead man?" asked

Humphries. Silently Muria raised his manacled hands and indicated the other end of the village. Above the thatched roofs rose the point of a burial platform, and even from that distance we could see that the platform held a body of some kind.

Humphries ordered Muria freed. "Come with us," he said, "and do not try to run. If you have told the truth you may go. If you have lied and try to escape I shall kill you."

As we strode down the street toward the burial platform I had an uneasy feeling that somewhere in the surrounding jungle curious and unfriendly eyes were watching.

Suddenly there was a cry from Muria and from one of the huts dashed a black form straight for us. As we reached for our weapons we saw that it was a woman. She flung herself upon Muria with little cries of what seemed like joy. But all the time she kept looking toward the far gate, and there was fear in her eyes.

"*Vavine lao*," said Muria, answering our unspoken question. "She is my woman, master, and she says that I must die."

"The govamen' will protect you," the magis-

trate assured him. "What have you done that your own village should say you die?"

Muria's face was troubled and he, too, glanced toward the far gate. "Master, it is the pay-back," he replied. "It was I who killed the man who lies upon the burial platform."

I wanted to laugh. It was impossible of belief. This little man the slayer of the redoubtable Yapitze? But then, if what we had been told was true, the killing had been done from ambush. It might be true, after all.

My eyes strayed toward the burial platform, and in that instant the far gate suddenly filled with savage faces, black bodies pushed and jostled their way inside of the stockade, and in a twinkling a hundred fighting men began to move slowly toward us. Instantly Humphries and I began moving back toward our party. Muria, with the woman's arms around him, stood as if paralysed.

We heard the corporal shouting out an order, and the police swung into skirmish line across the village street. Then we turned to look back over our shoulders. The savages were charging now, brandishing their weapons, yelling fiercely.

“ Treachery, master, treachery ? ” yelled Constable Maikeli. “ Muria has led us into a trap.”

Then for the first time I saw the little guide move. He thrust the woman away from him and bent over so that the little netted bag around his neck dangled free. Into it he plunged his hand and when he drew it out again he placed it to his mouth.

High above the tumult of the charging savages the shrill blast of a whistle cut the air—once, twice, three times.

Upon the villagers the effect was electrical. As one man they halted in their tracks and dropped to their haunches !

Muria was shrieking at them now. The words fairly poured from his lips and he walked toward the squatting warriors and, pausing a few yards from them, he shouted some last command. The whistle went to his lips again. Once it sounded and the savages sprang to their feet, whirled and went back the way they had come.

The woman had made her way to the side of the little cannibal now. He signed her to follow the warriors. Then Muria turned toward us and from his lips came a burst of laughter, loud

triumphant, mocking. The next instant he, too, was legging it for the far gate as fast as he could go.

“What does it mean? What did he say to them?” asked Humphries excitedly in Motuan.

Constable Maikeli shook his head. “He was so far away I understood only a few words,” he replied. “He told them to listen to the whistle of their master and obey, and then he told them to go.”

CHAPTER XVIII

INTO THE UNKNOWN

HUMPHRIES stroked his chin thoughtfully and gazed down the village street toward the gate through which Muria had just vanished.

“So far as chasing the Kapatea people is concerned, we are, as the natives say, ‘all finish,’” he said. “Without some kind of a guide we’d simply run ourselves around in circles and get nowhere, in addition to eating up the small amount of food we have left. Besides, this is no punitive expedition, and Kapatea seems quiet again. If Yapitze is dead, there won’t be any trouble for awhile. Guess I’ll go along and have a look at that burial platform.”

None of us climbed up the crude ladder to take a look at the body, however. There are some things against which any stomach rebels. We merely satisfied ourselves that a body was there, and from the signs it was the body of a chief.

Kaiva, the village constable who once had boasted of his "friend" Yapitze, was questioned at length. He insisted he did not know the man, repeated that he had been throwing a scare into the coastal carriers, and stoutly asserted his belief that Muria and the other Kapateans had told us the truth and Yapitze was dead.

When finally we gave up hoping to get any information from him, he went back quickly to his fellows, and a few moments later I heard him laughing immoderately. Whatever it was that amused him to the point of hysterics, the carriers apparently did not share the joke, for they regarded him perplexedly as if they wondered whether he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"We've got to decide here and now what our next step is to be," said Humphries. "I'll not try to conceal from you that a great deal, our lives even, may hang on that decision. Mostly it's a question of food. If we cut back to Kerepi and strike out for the coast by the shortest and safest route, the food supply will be enough to see us through.

"On the other hand, here we are at Tavivi.

No white man ever has penetrated beyond it, to my knowledge. Over there to the east lies the Pole range. What is between here and there we don't know. What is to be found on the Pole we don't know. If we can get up to it and follow it southward, we'll get to the coast in time. That's a mighty big 'if.' I'm going to let you chaps vote the way you feel. You don't have to consider the police or the carriers. They'll fare better than we will, no matter what we do."

It didn't take long to decide. Downing voiced my own thoughts, and I knew that Humphries was of the same mind.

"Luck's with us," said the photographer. "We've had no accidents worth mentioning so far. We haven't lost a man. We haven't met any special hostility in Kapatea. Let's push on to the Pole and take a chance."

With the reputation of the Tavivi people in mind, we took special precautions when we quit the comparative safety of the village. Each carrier was told to keep an axe, a hatchet, or a knife in his hand instead of lashed to his load. The police carried their rifles, muzzles to the fore, and were forbidden to sling them on their

backs. Our own holsters were unbuttoned and revolver butts kept ready to hand. At least four men were in the advance guard at all times, and an equal number at the rear. Other police were scattered among the carriers.

We saw not a single savage as we left Tavivi, headed east by our compasses. The trail was broad, and we followed it swiftly to a small creek. On the other side we found only a narrow hunting pad, winding tortuously up the slope. It slanted treacherously toward the rocky bed of the creek and we inched along it, setting one foot down carefully before lifting the other.

Suddenly there was a terrified screaming behind the four of us who were in the lead. The carriers dropped their loads and tried to huddle together on that narrow trail until it was impossible to get past them. Had there been an attack on the middle of the line? No shots came to our ears, only that screaming, and it seemed to come from the creek below the trail. The carriers were shouting that one of their number had been speared or clubbed, had fallen downhill and was being carried off by savages.

"Hold fast," I ordered the two policemen.

To Downing I added : " Stay with them, Harry, unless you hear a shot or my whistle. Then you come quick."

I dropped to my haunches and, catching at roots, saplings, rocks imbedded in the hill—anything that might slow that abrupt descent—I slid down to the creek, and began to follow it back. Up above me I could hear the carriers, and occasionally catch a glimpse of them.

There was a flopping in the water and those screams were getting louder and louder. I rounded a tiny bend to find a human form rolling in the creek. By the brownness of his skin I knew he must be a carrier. I dashed into the water and laid a hand upon his shock of hair and dragged him to his feet. A horrible sight met my eyes.

From neck to waist, front and back, the skin was almost entirely gone, and the raw, bleeding flesh was visible. It was as if he had been skinned alive. I knew him. He was only a boy, and in helping assign the loads I had purposely given him something light, a straw-filled bucket in which were packed the bottles of acid that were a necessary part of our photographic equipment.

It was plain that he had slipped from the

trail and rolled downhill. The bottles had been dumped from the bucket, and one of them had been smashed, flooding him with acid.

I blew my whistle and Downing joined me quickly. Even before he reached us I had yelled out to him what had happened.

"Tucker box, tucker box," he shouted, and I passed the word on to the carriers above. They understood that for some reason one of the boxes in which our own food was carried was being called for, and in a few minutes it came tumbling down to us.

"Butter," said Downing, and, picking up the boy carrier's axe where he had dropped it, I smashed the lock of the tucker box and seized a can of butter. We plastered the tortured boy with the greasy stuff to counteract the effect of the acid and water, and, when finally the medicine kit was handed down, bandaged him as best we could.

Had I been in that youngster's place, I should have wanted to die, but either he was made of sterner stuff or the thought of death as a way out of what must have been terrible suffering did not enter his mind. During all those days that

followed, weary mile after mile, he struggled through, moaning night and day but forcing himself to keep up. He could not lie down, because he could not bear anything to touch his flesh, and there was nothing we could do except to let him walk. We could not leave him to die, either, and, seeing he was gamely doing his share to live, we dressed his wounds every afternoon.

It always was a heart-rending matter. The police would seize and hold him, and Downing, with razor and hair-scissors, cut away the dead skin and proud-flesh. We had no anæsthetics, and because his screams were likely to attract savages, we were compelled to gag him. When he had been treated and bandaged, however, he fell back into moaning and whimpering and occasional threats to kill us for hurting him.

Poor little chap !

After a bit we got the line moving again. The trail began to point upward toward the top of the mountain, and hours of struggle brought us up to the crest.

Upon a log sat a naked black man, and I rubbed my eyes, unable to believe what I saw.

“ Muria ! ” I gasped.

The treacherous little guide grinned in apparent enjoyment of my surprise. "*Io, taubada,*" he said in Motuan. "I saw you coming this way and came to warn you. Over there"—he waved a hand toward the Pole range across the valley—"the people are bad. They will kill and eat you. Go back."

"No," I said. "The white man does not fear them." Then I changed the subject abruptly. "Why did you run away from us?"

His fingers strayed to his neck. Now I saw that a tin whistle hung from it by a loop of pliant vine. "This," he said, "belonged to the man who is dead and may not be mentioned. When he was killed it came to me. It has the magic still. The people obey it, as you saw. When my people left the village I followed to tell them you were friends and must not be harmed."

Of course I couldn't believe it. This meek and humble little rat of a man able to control savages such as the Tavivi people have proved themselves? It was preposterous, yet I had seen them obey the whistle, and we had not been molested by them. He might be telling the truth.

He seemed much disappointed at my refusal to turn back, and when, after a rest, we pushed on, he went with us.

Half-way up the side of the Pole our entire party gathered in a clearing for the noon meal, and Humphries decided that he would send scouts ahead to spy out the lay of the land and ascertain, if possible, what kind of people we would meet.

Corporal Sonana and Constable Dengo were chosen. They were natives of the Mambare mountains, clever bushmen and veteran policemen. They disappeared along the trail, and an hour or so afterwards we heard a single shot. That spelled danger to our minds. Bullets are precious, and no policeman uses one without good reason. So we got up and hurried along in the direction they had taken.

The path emerged from the jungle into a great space where trees had been felled. The logs lay helter-skelter and matted sweet-potato vines covered everything. The huge garden could mean only one thing. The village to which it belonged was no small affair. By climbing upon a log we could see thatched roofs a quarter of

a mile away, barely showing above the brow of the hill.

With the police flanking them on both sides, we started the carriers climbing over those awful logs. Then some one sang out and we stopped to examine a small cleared space among the logs, where a story lay unfolded to the eye.

The sweet-potato vines were torn up as if here a struggle had taken place. In the soft earth were the prints of bare feet, a deeper indentation where a body had been hurled to the ground, the clearly defined outline of a rifle-butt. On the rough bark of a log were a few blue threads that could have come only from a police uniform.

We white men looked at one another. What had happened? Had the savages ambushed Sonana and Dengo and captured, perhaps killed, them?

We advanced warily then, and after a time were done with the log-littered gardens and came to a fence. The village was not far off, but hidden from us by the trees. We could hear the buzzing of voices, and, silent as we had tried to make our own movements, it was hard to believe the savages were unaware of our coming.

Crawling over the fence, we followed a path around a bend and found ourselves at the very edge of the village. In its very centre squatted a hundred or more natives. We could see the bows and spears of the men and tell that women and children were with them. At sight of us they sprang to their feet, but a sharp voice spoke to them and they dropped back upon their haunches. As we white men advanced we saw them looking at us with terror in their eyes, and discovered that they were trembling violently.

Then Corporal Sonana dropped off the slanting roof of a hut where he had been sitting and saluted stiffly.

"Constable Dengo is guarding them," he said. "We captured a man in the gardens and made him sing out to the others to stand fast."

Thus simply he dismissed an exploit that in a war would have earned them both decorations galore. I pried the details out of Dengo with difficulty.

It seems that he and Sonana had discovered the lone villager picking sweet-potatoes and had slipped up on him and taken him prisoner after a desperate battle. That single shot we had

heard had been accidentally fired when a rifle was knocked over and, being cocked, was discharged. The report had badly frightened the captive, but apparently it had aroused no curiosity among the villagers.

Dengo said it was easy to tell the prisoner by signs to lead them to his village, and there, by their very audacity in entering it, they had overawed the people without a fight. Don't ask me why they weren't both killed immediately. It is just the same psychological reason, I believe, that induces a train-load of people to let one or two bandits intimidate and rob them, with one difference. The Pole savages didn't know what a rifle was.

Anyhow, when we arrived, the two constables had the villagers herded together and were keeping them that way. It struck me that they resembled the man who had a bear by the tail and couldn't let go. They were masters of the village, but they couldn't leave it in safety.

In my enthusiasm for their bravery I was for strongly urging the Governor to do something for them. Rather reluctantly Dengo would name only one thing he wanted me to do. He would

appreciate it if I could keep him out of jail. It seems that some time before he had engaged in a fight with a corporal or a sergeant who had said disparaging things about Dengo's tribe. In the battle the other man had fastened his teeth in Dengo's rather large nose and bitten it so severely it had not yet healed.

According to custom, Dengo was sentenced to jail for the assault. Serving his time, however, was being postponed until our return. Veteran members of the constabulary were not so plentiful that our detachment could be fixed up easily, so Dengo had been sent along. I might mention in aside that he didn't see the inside of the jail after all, for I easily fixed it up when we got back to civilization.

Muria proved himself quite valuable as an interpreter during the two days we stopped at Lumimait, as this village was called. To protect ourselves we had the villagers pile their weapons up at the side of a tent, and it was only when we were on our way out of there that we laid them beside the trail.

Disarmed as they were, we did not feel we were in much danger from them, although their

attitude was far from friendly. The women favoured us with insulting gestures and apparently were trying to goad their men into attacking us. In an effort to convince them we were friendly, we called for Muria again. But the little cannibal had slipped away without the formality of saying good-bye.

In this Muria was far cleverer than we thought then.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SKULL SINISTER .

THE Pole is grass-covered, and it lies between two small streams that converge at its southern end. Leaving Lumimait, we found the walking easy and the trail wide and hard packed. We knew we were being followed by our late involuntary hosts, but we didn't care. In country like this they couldn't ambush us, and a fight in the open was most unlikely. Perhaps, having shown the Lumimait people we were not unfriendly, we might have found our progress quite a tame affair but for a trivial thing—the skull of a man long since dead.

When first we saw the skull it was hanging upon a fence surrounding a burial platform on stilts. At some long-ago feast it had held the place of honour and been painted with the blood of a pig. Now hanging on the fence as a reminder of the man it once had belonged to, it grinned as

evilly upon us as its owner must have done in life.

I had reached out my hand to take it for examination when my arm was seized with a grip like steel pincers. Fornier, the old village constable of Rarai, stood beside me. His eyes were dilated, his breath came from his nostrils in gasps.

"Do not touch it, master, or we all shall die," he said.

I am not the one to trample upon the beliefs of any man, and no doubt I should have respected the superstitions of old Fornier and passed on, leaving the skull where it was.

Whether Humphries heard what had been said or merely wished to display his contempt for the old constable's fears I don't know, but he pushed past us and plucked the grisly thing from the fence and rolled it over in his hands.

"It must have taken a giant to wear a thing like that," he said. "We'll take it on down to Port Moresby and let the anthropologists have a go at it. I never saw one quite so large."

Quite as a matter of fact, he turned to old Fornier and tossed the skull toward him. "Here," he snapped, "you carry it."

For twenty years Fornier had served the white man faithfully and well, but not twice twenty years would serve to rid his mind of the superstitions and fears bequeathed to him by many generations of ancestors. A terrific battle must have been waged inside of him during that brief moment the skull was traversing the air. As a native his every instinct rebelled against touching the ghastly thing. As a government man he stretched out cupped hands and caught it as his superior had commanded. Then he tucked it gravely under his arm, but upon his face was registered deep concern.

When we paused for the noon meal the aged constable refused to eat. He had violated a taboo, and, unwilling as his offence had been, he feared that his food might poison him. Even the police seemed affected. As for the carriers, they seemed on the verge of panic, and they could not keep their eyes off the skull.

"Chuck it away," I suggested to Humphries. His lips tightened stubbornly.

"No native is going to bull-doze me, openly or any other way," he replied. "The skull goes along."

At the very next village we approached the people were expecting us. They were gathered outside the gate, and they took to their heels as we came up, but they hovered not far off and did not seem either hostile or frightened. No doubt the Lumimait folk had informed them we were harmless.

In the village itself we found a couple of decrepit men, too old to be warriors or stalk the wallaby or kangaroo rat in the bush. Apparently they had remained to test us out. Great quantities of sweet-potatoes were roasting in their fires, and sugar-cane, freshly cut, was piled up on the platform of a hut. They motioned to us to help ourselves.

Then one of them caught sight of the skull under Fournier's arm. In the twinkling of an eye his friendly toothless grin vanished, his bent frame stiffened, his eyes blazed in their cavernous sockets, and he spoke sharply. The next minute he and his withered companion fled from our proximity and we heard them bawling to their fellows in undeniably angry tones.

Humphries chose to ignore the very obvious reason for their change of attitude toward us.

“ This won’t do,” he said. “ They’ll have the whole population of the mountain after us. We had best get along and cross that creek east of the range before night, or we may find ourselves in a tight place.”

But we could find no trail leading toward the stream, and perforce kept on down the Pole. It did not help us any to see that the natives were following us quite openly now, and that their numbers constantly were being increased. They displayed their weapons and brandished them at us and yelled violently.

We pushed on through the saw-edged grass until we reached another village surrounded by a stout barricade, and there we pitched our camp. All night long we could hear yells at a distance, but were not molested.

As usual, the carriers’ loads had been piled under canvas in case it rained. Fornier had set the skull on top of the loads and the carriers chose to sleep out in the open rather than share the tent with the sinister thing.

Api, our first cook, came from the Orocolo tribe on the Gulf of Papua, and all his life he had lived within sight and sound and smell of the

sea. The mountains and dense jungle depressed him, and, belonging as he did to a sad and solemn people steeped in superstitions and belief in sorcery, the skull appeared to exert a malign influence upon him.

"There's a debbil-debbil in here," he said when we took him to task for not eating his supper. He pointed to his shoulder, and his eyes strayed to the skull. He began to groan, doing his best apparently to cast out the debbil-debbil. We ordered him to shut up, but he only groaned more, so we chased him away from us.

He disappeared in the direction of the carriers, and a few moments later we heard them shrieking, and Kauri, the second cook, came rushing up to us.

"Masters," he cried, "Api has been hit by the debbil-debbil."

Api himself was running toward us then. His limbs were shaking violently and his shoulders and back were covered with blood. Across his back were a dozen wicked knife-slashes.

"Who did this?" demanded Humphries.

"I cut myself to let the debbil-debbil out of

the holes," said Api, and a butcher-knife dropped from his hand.

"And spoiled a damned good cook," growled the magistrate. "Get out your medicine kit, Harry, and we'll fix him up."

"No, no," protested Api, "more better I die."

With a bound he cleared the fire beside which we had been standing, dashed for the village fence, fumbled for a moment at the fastenings of the gate, and disappeared.

"He'll come back," predicted Humphries, and we thought no more about it until we discovered next morning that he had not returned. We gave him up for lost then. If he had not already been killed by the savages, he soon would be, we believed, and although he had been a faithful and likeable chap, we decided against making any effort to find him. Our own lives were too much in danger.

Our way the next morning lay along the top of the ridge, and it puzzled us that we saw no blacks. But I could not rid myself of a feeling that the jungle about us was not as deserted as it seemed. An ominous sort of quiet hung over

it, and, walking behind the two policemen who were leading, I noticed that they, too, seemed uneasy. Their eyes wandered from the trail to where in the distance the cockatoos were fluttering noisily above the trees, a sure sign that something on the ground below was exciting them.

Then we came to the peak of the ridge, and the trail led us out of the jungle into grass-covered country. It sloped gently upward toward a small hill, and suddenly the leading policeman stopped abruptly and pointed a shaking finger. Not a hundred yards distant the rise was covered with armed natives, silhouetted against the sky!

Only for a minute or two were they in sight before they disappeared, apparently drawing down behind the hill. When, however, we topped the rise, they were gone, and the trail to where the jungle began again was invitingly clear.

For several minutes the police stood on top of the hill and scanned the country ahead of us with anxious eyes. Trained in the methods of savage warfare, they saw only danger in the very quiet and peace which seemed to surround us. When again we went forward their rifles were at the ready, and they fairly trod on each other's heels

in the narrow path which would not permit them to walk abreast.

Their nervousness communicated itself to me, and I loosened the revolver in the holster at my hip, so that with one sweeping motion I could draw it ready to fire.

When we in the advance guard passed into the fringe of the jungle, the first of our carriers, led by two policemen, were fifty yards in the rear. Just ahead of us the trail bent sharply, and, signalling for us to step softly, one of the policemen ran ahead and peered around the bend. Then he signalled us to come on.

Twenty yards beyond the bend the trail debouched suddenly into a little clearing. As we entered it there was a crackling of the underbrush, savage yells burst into our ears, and the jungle about us, only a moment before devoid of all sound or movement, became literally alive with natives and bristled with their weapons!

In the one brief look which I flashed about me I saw an ever-converging circle closing down upon us, their cruel faces alight with thoughts of the feast to come. Instantly I sensed to the full the seriousness of our predicament. Behind I

could hear the shrieking of the carriers, the cries of the police as they strove to hold the panic-stricken men in line. Then the shrill blast of a whistle cut the air—once, twice, three times—and I knew that from far in the rear Humphries and more police were rushing to our aid.

I realized that they could not arrive in time, that in only a minute or two now there would come a shower of missiles, followed by a rush of savages, and my two policemen and myself would pass out. Never did thoughts gallop more madly through the brain of a drowning man than did mine at that instant. True to their training, my companions held their rifles ready but did not fire. It was in their code that they must never shoot until a white man gave the order or until their lives were about to be forfeited. Too often had the savages lost their nerve at the critical moment and fled to risk inciting them by a bullet or two.

Why we had not already been trampled underfoot puzzled me. This inching along toward us was not at all in keeping with bush warfare as I had understood it, where all is staked upon a quick and powerful rush. Why? Why? Why?

Like a flash the answer to that question and the solution of the problem upon which three lives were staked flashed into my mind.

I dropped the revolver and swept the broad-brimmed hat from my head, seized my shirt by the neckband and pulled it over my head. Then I stepped toward the savages. Was I right or was I to pay for my foolhardiness with my life?

For the length of time it takes a clock to tick half a dozen times we stood there facing each other, those naked savages and I. Then they stirred uneasily, there was a wavering in their midst, a few sharply exhaled breaths, a long-drawn-out "you-e-e-e" from one of them, and they were in wild flight, running down the trail for their very lives, charging through the underbrush, tripping over roots and stones and vines, shrieking wildly and fighting each other to get away from there.

I had guessed right. They never had seen a white man before, and, stripped to the waist, with the sunbeams flashing upon my skin, I had struck terror into the very marrow of their beings!

When Humphries and his men came running up, I had sunk to the ground, weak and shaken

by the reaction of those few tense moments, and my policemen were filling the jungle with their shouts of laughter at the fleeing savages.

It was a trick which stood us in good stead afterwards when, either at close or long range, we were uncertain as to the temper of the natives and wished to impress them. Then whichever white man was in the lead would strip to the waist and we'd go ahead in the knowledge that before the savages could muster up the courage to investigate such an unheard-of thing as a human being with a white skin we would pass out of their district into another where the same thing could be done over again.

CHAPTER XX

UNWELCOME HOSTS

THOSE people of the Pole range were the most consistently hostile of any we met. We did not see them often, but they laid frequent ambushes for us and sometimes appeared in force upon small knolls ahead of us. But not once did they attack openly, and there were times when I wished that they would. The knowledge that they were skulking along on all sides of us as we wound our way through the jungle was far more nerve-wrecking than a fight would have been.

The most dangerous and least easily detected ambush consisted of cleared lanes that entered the trail at an angle, so that from hiding-places at the far end they could let fly spears and arrows at our backs as we passed. We who were in the lead were in danger of developing sore necks from twisting our heads to look back for these dangerous lanes; but it paid. Whenever we found one,

whether we could see any savages or not, we put a policeman on guard where he could watch the far end and take steps to stop an attack. Once they saw their traps had been discovered, the savages always abandoned them.

Already we had become accustomed to having solitary spears and arrows fall near us, usually coming from such a distance that they were spent and did not hurt if they did strike anyone. We were ever on guard, however, against infection, and disinfected and cauterized even the tiniest of scratches or wounds. The New Guinea native poisons his missiles with decaying bits of meat in which he imbeds the points for several days. He does the same with small sticks and sets them in the trail with the sharp points exposed, so that a passing enemy will stick or scratch himself and thus become infected.

How these danger-spots were marked so that friends did not step on them I never could learn. Kaiva, the village constable of Maipa, knew the secret, and I did not for a moment believe his claim that he was able to sense where they were without being guided by any sign. One day, seeing him carefully stepping over a leaf on the trail,

and hearing him call out a warning to the men behind, I turned over the leaf and found three sharp sticks under it.

That afternoon we were in dense jungle in the midst of a heavy downpour and could find no level space in which to throw up our flies. We pressed on, drenched and miserable, and finally clambered over a rocky native garden to a small village, where it was decided to camp.

Humphries saw the work of erecting tents started, then got hold of his swag-bag and started to go into one of the tiny huts to change his clothing. Immediately he popped out again with a startled yell. The hut was occupied by a dozen savages !

Ordinarily none of us would have investigated the huts as a precaution. Experience had shown us that invariably the natives either welcomed us openly or fled with all their belongings. The huts, moreover, had such stench that we white men avoided nausea by leaving them alone. By respecting their homes we had an idea we could convince the natives that we were friendly, so the police and carriers had orders not to enter them either. It was, of course, purely an acci-

dent that this time was an exception. And it was an exception to find this hut occupied. Probably the natives had figured we would pass on as we had been doing other villages, or it may have been that they didn't know we were coming.

"What will we do now?" asked Humphries, after he had satisfied himself none of the other huts were likewise tenanted. "If anyone goes in and tries to boot them out, he'll be killed to a certainty. If we leave them alone, we'll never sleep a wink all night, and if they want to, they can pick us off at their leisure."

Standing there in the rain, we tried vainly for half an hour to coax them out. But they didn't even so much as peep out of the door, although I have no doubt they had their eyes glued to cracks in the hut walls. We tossed a knife near the door, point stuck in the ground, and moved away. Very cleverly and without revealing himself, one chap lassoed it with a noose of vine and pulled it into the hut. We put a string of gaudy beads near the door, and it was picked up on the point of a long spear and went to join the knife.

We couldn't blame those savages for thinking our gifts were presents to lure them into the

open and for refusing to come out and be killed, as no doubt they thought we had in mind doing. Some one expressed a belief that food might do the trick, so we tried to toll them with sweet-potatoes, hot off the fire. They snatched them off the points of spears when we presented them at the door, but would not show themselves. In disgust we went about getting and eating our own meal.

Soon we heard the constable calling softly. One of the savages, he said, had been sticking his head out of the door of the hut. We hid ourselves to watch.

Believing that no attention was being paid him, the savage became bolder, the rest of his body followed his head until he was in the open. Then he shot to his feet, streaked for the fence, leaped for its top, caught it and went over.

Emboldened by the first man's success, another followed a few minutes later, and a third was hard on his heels. But the fourth did not fare so well. Short and squat, his leap for the top of the fence was short by inches. Frantically he tried again and again. Leisurely two of the police approached him. The savage backed up against the fence,

spear poised, lips drawn back from his teeth in a snarl like that of a beast and his throat giving vent to a threatening rumble.

Corporal Sonana carried a hot potato in his hand. Coolly he approached that threatening spear and proffered its owner the potato. The savage made no attempt to take it, but the spear wavered for a moment and Sonana seized the opportunity to jab the potato upon its point. Then he turned, walked to the gate, opened it and signalled the savage that he might go if he wished.

Doubtfully the man sidled toward it, his potato-tipped spear still held ready for action. A few feet from the exit he let his spear drop from its threatening pose and dashed out, followed by our hilarious laughter.

The whole thing had been perfectly visible to his fellows inside the hut, and almost at once one of them took a chance and emerged. Sonana motioned him toward the gate, but the man halted and stuck out his spear. For only a moment were we puzzled.

“By the trumpet of Gabriel,” cried Humphries, “the beggar wants a potato before he goes.”

In only part was he mistaken. The savage did want a potato, and grimaced delightedly when Sonana jabbed it upon the spear. But instead of departing, the savage squatted upon the ground and began to wolf the food. It was too much for his fellows. One by one they came out, got their potatoes and squatted down to eat. ·

Presently, as their confidence increased, they drew nearer, and, seeing we still ignored them, approached the end of our tent and curiously watched us get ready for the night. I guessed that they were deeply interested in our white skins, and extended an arm toward the closest one. Rather gingerly he poked at my wrist with an inquisitive finger, and, finding no harm came to him, rubbed it gently. The others were willing to try it then, and they crowded up to take their turns. It must have afforded them a great deal of fun, for they giggled like a pack of silly schoolgirls while they did it.

The rain had ceased now, so we drew up a camp-stool, an empty bucket and a box of cartridges, and sat down. Our visitors squatted on the other side of the fire, and for an hour or so we amused them as we had done the Kaivala

people. Then we got up and were almost bowled over in their rush to get the seats we had just vacated. No doubt they were trying to get for themselves the "strength" that the mountain Papuan believes passes into anything another touches. Perhaps it was this belief that influenced their actions the following day.

When they discovered we planned to retire, they went back to their hut, and while we would have preferred them outside the fence with their fellows, we dared not risk their enmity by driving them out of their own village, so contented ourselves with stationing a constable where he could keep an eye upon their doorway.

In order to ensure quiet, it was customary for us to blow a whistle promptly at nine o'clock every night. This was the signal for silence and for the police to put out the hurricane lamps.

This night there was no need for the whistle. Exhaustion had claimed the carriers and police, and, with the exception of the sentinels, they already were asleep. Before turning in, I made a round of the camp and glanced into the tents. The carriers lay huddled together in a long row on either side of the fire that burned down the

middle of the tent, with their blankets overlapping for greater warmth. As I watched, the man on the end of one row turned over, and the others followed suit, so that all of them again faced in the same direction.

Lest it wake them, I put the whistle back in my pocket unblown, told the corporal to put out the lamps, and sought my cot. My thoughts as I rolled in were rather jubilant. We had come many weary miles through hostile territory, surrounded by cannibals, our lives and limbs constantly endangered, and we were still an efficient, rapidly moving body of men. The end of the expedition, we thought, was near at hand.

The only tinge of sadness was our loss of Api, the cookee boy. He was only an ignorant black boy, still considerable of a savage, but he had been a good cook and an uncomplaining worker, and I missed him, even though in Papua human life is so very, very cheap that the death of a native affects only his immediate family. I was sorry, too, for the little Mekeo carrier, burned by acid, who so stoically had borne his horrible sufferings. As I made the round, I had seen him sitting up beside a little fire, unable to lie

down and rest properly because of his burns. He had favoured me with a shy little smile and accepted with a bob of the head the two cigarettes I had tendered. I could not rid myself of the memory of the tortured look in his eyes, however.

Silence brooded over the camp, broken only by the drip of water now and then and the sound of the sentinels' bare feet when they drew near our tent. The heavy mist of night was settling fast, so that the village fence, only a few yards away, was only an indistinct shadow against the background of jungle.

Sleep refused to come to my eyes. My thoughts turned on home, so very far away it seemed that night. Resolutely I tried to picture sheep jumping over a fence, counting slowly up to the hundreds, and finally the number of paces the sentinel outside took before he turned at the end of his beat. I could not see him, but my ears told me that he had stopped suddenly and was peering toward the jungle beyond the fence. Then I caught his low "*Daḥa*" ("What is it?") of another sentinel, the latter's answer that he did not know. I propped myself up on an elbow to listen the better.

Then I heard what had attracted their attention

—a weird, mournful half-howl, half-wail far down the mountainside. It began low, rose to a high-pitched wail, died out, began all over again. I could not tell whether it was the cry of an animal or of a human being, and, unable to let it go at that, I threw off the blankets, slipped on my sodden boots, threw a sweater about my shoulders and went outside.

“*Taubada*?” challenged one of the sentinels.

“Yes,” I replied. “What *boiboi* (noise) you hear?”

He came toward me, and I identified him as Constable Yawana, Downing’s orderly. His knowledge of English was fragmentary.

“I do not know,” he said in Motuan.

Inside the police tent men were stirring, aroused by our voices. Then one sprang to his feet, seized his rifle and came padding through the mud to my side. Dengo, my orderly, had recognized me and was on the job.

That weird howling was rapidly approaching the village. It woke Humphries, never a heavy sleeper, and he called out sharply to know what was going on. Without waiting for a reply, he joined us, listened intently, then broke into

laughter. His better trained ears had told him what we others had failed to discover.

“Dengo,” he ordered, “go open the gate and let that howling blighter in. How he managed it I don’t know, but that’s Api making all that hullabaloo.”

So it proved. When Dengo threw open the gate, a weary, bedraggled, mud-spattered cookee boy staggered through, and, still howling, crouched by a fire. He ignored us and our questions and our commands to shut up, and kept up his noise until the whole camp was stirring. Then, overcome by the warmth, he toppled over and slept. The police dragged him under canvas, tossed a blanket over him, and quiet once more enveloped the camp.

How did Api do it? We never learned. Days later he told us he had no recollection of what had happened. I can only guess, and your guess is as good as mine.

CHAPTER XXI

AMBUSHED !

“ **M**ASTER, do we take this with us ? ”

Fornier, the old village constable of Rarai, pointed to the huge skull of which we had despoiled the burial platform. He had placed it in a sheltered spot beside a hut during the night, and there is little doubt that in his mind he was blaming the thing for our discomforts and danger. Yet he dared not leave it behind.

Humphries was disposed to be short about it.

“ Yes. Bring it along,” he said.

“ If I did not have it I could carry many things,” insinuated Fornier. By virtue of his office he was not expected to carry a load, but evidently he preferred even that to further custody of the gruesome relic.

“ Bring it.”

“ Yes, master,” murmured Fornier, picking up the skull and tucking it under his arm.

The eight or nine savages belonging to the village stood near by, much interested. One made to take the skull from the old constable, who warded him off. Glad as he would have been to get rid of the thing, having been ordered to carry it, he would not delegate the job to another.

As we plodded out of the village the savages dashed to the head of the line and began to offer to relieve the carriers of parts of their loads. Often friendly mountaineers had done this, and we made no objections now. I smiled as I noticed that the villagers were particular about what they took—a camp-stool, a bucket in which bottles of acid had been packed, a hurricane lamp, a kerosene can, our canvas water-bottles and Downing's camera tripod. All of them were things on which we had sat or handled in their presence the night before. Still trying to "get strength," I surmised, and was tempted to laugh outright when the rascal who chose to carry the box of rifle cartridges which I had used for a seat let out a grunt of surprise at its weight.

I protested vigorously, however, when one of his fellows tried to get hold of the swag-bag in which were packed my clothes and blankets and

a small sack of silver coins with which to pay off the carriers when we were done with them. It must have been a hunch.

Guided by the nine, we found our going much easier, for the trail by which they led us led along the side of the mountain and had few dangerous spots. No savages seemed to be skulking in the jungle near us, and we travelled rapidly, but without once being lulled into a false feeling of security.

We came at last upon a grassy slope, and our field-glasses told us that the large village at its very bottom overlooked the junction of the streams which run down either side of the Pole range. On the east, where we proposed to go, a most forbidding mountain, covered with heavy jungle, loomed up. Inwardly we groaned at the prospect of having to cross it, but felt that its people might be friendly in comparison with the Pole natives, whom we seemed to have antagonized right at the start. The Pole was getting on our nerves.

From a little knoll our guides sang out excitedly and at length to the village below. Although there were no answering shouts, they began the

descent confidently. Their bare feet gave them a better purchase than our boots, and we were quickly outdistanced. Any suspicion that we might have had that they were trying to leave us in the lurch was dissipated when at the gate of the village they stopped, waved at us to come ahead, and entered.

When we were still a hundred yards away, however, we discovered them running out of the other end of the village and sprinting for the jungle with our things, most valuable to us but worthless to them. It was not hard to surmise that the temptation to keep the "strong" things of the white men had proved too much.

On other occasions when natives had shown signs of running away with things, we had found that they would drop them if pursued, and particularly if a shot or two was fired at them. So the police gave chase now, hopeless as it was. Suddenly they came to a halt, their rifles went to their shoulders, and, just as we were watching for the puffs of smoke that meant shots, began to fall back rapidly in our direction.

Quickly we saw the reason. The jungle on both sides of the grassy slope on which we stood

most of the carriers down the cliff and set about bridging the stream.

Although their lives depended upon it, the carriers were slow about felling trees and floating them into position. When it came to going into the jungle and cutting vines to tie the logs together and lash poles for a handrail, they balked altogether.

For the first time I was really angry with them. I seized a stick and, shouting angrily, charged. Great as was their fear of the savages, they promptly went up the cliff yelling "*Taubada* has gone wild," and, behind the guard, began hacking down vines and creepers.

Our bridge was a fearsome, shaky thing that went under the surface when we stepped upon it, but inside of an hour we had passed the loads down the cliff and got the carriers across. The hardest part was still to come, to get the police down the cliff and over the stream in safety.

It was Downing who solved the problem. He rummaged about in the loads, got hold of several pounds of flashlight powder and carried it to the top of the cliff. Then we had the police fire a

volley and charge toward the jungle. As we had expected, the savages bolted.

Before they mustered the courage to return, Downing had poured out the powder upon the ground in a line many yards long, and at one end laid a fuse made of an old shirt, soaked in the kerosene from our one surviving hurricane lamp. He touched a match to the shirt and we dashed for the cliff, tumbled down it any old fashion, and went across the bridge as rapidly as we could.

Behind us the savages, taking heart from our flight, came yelling along the cliff just as the flame reached the powder and it went off with a dull boom, a sheet of flame and heavy smoke.

Busy with the matter of destroying the bridge we had built with so much trouble, we had not time to see all that took place among the savages, but half a dozen tumbled down the cliff. Apparently they were not badly hurt, for they were up in an instant and legging it up or down the bank at top speed. We sat down then and laughed heartily, for we were safe so far as the Pole people were concerned. Beyond that stream, the dividing line between their lands and those of the tribes to the east, they would never come.

I do not recall having seen Api previously that morning, but now he made his presence known by bursting into those weird, irritating howls.

"Shut up," I yelled, and plunked him in the ribs with a small pebble, hard enough to sting but not to hurt. He shot to his feet, glared at me, then resumed his howling and began climbing up the bank toward the jungle. He ignored our yells for him to come back, and instantly we were startled by another howl in our midst. Kauri, our other cook and Api's fellow-tribesman, had been infected by the debbil-debbil too. In a moment he had set out after his partner.

Humphries shrugged and turned his attention to the meal which Kauri had deserted half cooked.

"In a couple of hours they'll have all the savages on this mountain roused and howling about our ears," he predicted gloomily. "It might prove a good thing for us if those two coves dropped dead right now."

"Master," broke in a constable excitedly, "more better you send the police to shoot the black cows."

Humphries shook his head.

"No," he said, "I'm not going to wear the police out running them down, but if they come back to us and start that howling again, I'll clap the handcuffs on them and gag them. Perhaps," he added gloomily, "I'll let you shoot them then. We can't afford to have our lives endangered by a pair of insane niggers."

The fact that when he had eaten he became cheerful again leads me to doubt very seriously whether he meant any of his threats. For a man faced with the necessity of always maintaining an air of severity towards natives in general, he was quite careful of their well-being, and I never saw anyone more reluctant to give the word that might mean death or injury for even a savage.

Nevertheless, those two howling lunatics off in the jungle presented a serious menace to our safety. We could hear them no longer, when finally we got up and began the weary ascent of Mount Kuvote, as we later learned it was called. That ascent toward the fairly level top we had seen, from the other side, gradually rising to a wooded peak, will long remain in my memory as one of the most agonizing of our many climbs.

We had been unable to find a trail along the

water and were compelled to climb as best we could, clinging to roots and saplings and constantly endangered by boulders that were dislodged by the slightest touch and came crashing down upon those of us who came last. It was late in the afternoon when we came to the top and grass.

"As soon as we come to water we'll pitch camp," said Humphries. "I could stand a drink right now."

He called for the constable who was charged with seeing that the water-bags were kept full.

"The people back yonder stole them all, master," he said.

"I had forgotten," replied the magistrate. "Oh, well, another hour or two won't make much difference."

But when we came to a tiny trickle, muddy and vile to the taste, he hesitated. A policeman was sent to follow it in either direction, but found nothing better. So we dug a hole large enough to accommodate a bucket, used bamboo to pipe the trickle into it and finally got enough water to cook supper.

"Good thing we found this," said Downing, delving into the food-box. "There isn't a thing

left that could be eaten unless we had water. Which shall it be, oatmeal or rice? "

Over our oatmeal, damper bread and tea some one mentioned the fact that not only had we failed to find any indication of a trail, but neither had we seen signs of a garden or village.

"That's strange, indeed," said Humphries. "I never heard of such a thing before. I'd think that enemies had wiped out all the people on the mountain, only we haven't seen any place where there were even the skeletons of huts. Most unusual."

We were moving again at dawn, content to delay breakfast until we came to running water and eager to make all the distance we could before the blistering sun came up.

But we had made several miles and quit the grass to skirt Kuvote's wooded peak and my thirst had become acute when the constable who had been acting as point came running back.

"Mountain he plenty quick finish," he cried. "Plenty up and down. No can get to river."

We brushed the carriers out of our way and ran to the spot from which we had seen him turn back. A thin fringe of bamboo lined the edge of

the mountain, and just beyond it was a sheer drop of thousands of feet to where two small streams came together in a smother of foam among the boulders. One glance told us it was a physical impossibility to get down there.

“Not even a native could get down there,” said Humphries dully. “We must turn back quickly and find a way to the river soon. Our lives depend upon it. I’ve solved the secret of why we found no trails, no signs of gardens or villages.”

“And what,” cried Downing and I together, “is that?”

Through lips that were thick and dry came four words that struck fear into my very soul:

“The mountain is waterless!”

CHAPTER XXII

THIRST !

ONLY those who have felt excruciating, torturing thirst can realize the suffering that was ours as we turned to retrace our steps and find another way down to the river east of Kuvote.

Circling its peak, we had noticed that three spurs jutted off the mountain in that direction. Two of them were jungle-covered, the third had only high saw-edged grass. Experience had taught us that we were more likely to find a way down a mountain side if we stuck to those slopes that were heavily wooded. The grassy spur was the most inviting, however, this time. It appeared to slant more toward the river than the other two, we could push our way down it more rapidly than we could through jungle, and if our hopes that it offered a way down were unrealized, we could come back and try another spur before nightfall. On the other hand, if we tackled a

jungle-covered spur first, we would have to cut our way down it, a long, exhausting process that would leave us unfit to return and repeat the performance on the third spur.

There was no need of carrying our loads downhill if we were going to be compelled to bring them back again, so we ordered the carriers to drop their burdens where they were and sit or lie down while three of the freshest constables investigated the grassy spur.

Within two hours they were back. The grass had ended at the top of a precipice that dropped almost straight down to the river. Even Dengo, the mountaineer, balked at trying to descend it.

"*Toressi*," cried Humphries, and apathetically the carriers got up and followed us back along the trail we had come, back through the grass that jabbed and stabbed and sawed at our skins, back through the bamboos to the edge of the jungle that covers the crest of the mountain. Then we turned east, skirting the forest till we came to where the first of the timbered spurs began.

Here we once more halted. Humphries' eyes were troubled as he surveyed the police. They

were hollow-eyed and weary and sagged in their tracks as they waited for him to designate those upon whose endurance within the next few hours all our lives might depend.

“ Hang it, I don’t know which ones to send,” he said, turning to me. I knew what he meant. During all those weeks that we had been on the trail there had been no rest for the constabulary. True, they had carried no loads beyond their rifles and the knapsacks with their change of clothing, and their blankets, but upon them had fallen the scouting in advance of the main body, the sentinel duties, the putting up and taking down of the tents, the cutting of trails, the fighting. They were at the point of exhaustion.

“ Ask for volunteers,” I suggested.

He nodded, snapped them to attention and told them what was wanted. Every man-jack of them stepped forward !

“ Oh, lie down, all of you,” said Humphries, but in his tones there was a pride that he could not conceal.

Corporal Sonana approached, saluted stiffly and spoke.

“ *Taubada*,” he said, “ it is only right that

when there is a duty to be performed the corporal shall take the lead. I shall go and look for the trail, and with me shall go Constables Yawana and Waimura, for they are veterans. Constable Dengo shall remain in charge of the others in my place."

Instantly the two he had named were on their feet and were among the carriers, demanding the sharpest knives, two for each of the three who were to make the attempt.

"You understand that we must find water quickly," instructed the magistrate. "Otherwise we die. If on the way down the spur you find water, fire one shot. Two shots will mean you have come across a trail."

"I understand, master," said Sonana. The three shot their hands to their foreheads in salute and disappeared among the trees.

One hour, two hours passed. None of us spoke, afraid that we might not hear the shot that meant relief. Then, too, our parched throats and swollen tongues made it painful. We picked up twigs or grass or leaves, and chewed them silently in an effort to bring moisture into our mouths.



A MOUNTAIN VILLAGE IN PAPUA



BRIDGING THE LOLOIPA

Suddenly there was a dull boom down the mountainside and we sprang to our feet, ears cocked for a possible second shot that would mean a trail. Then "*rhano*," cried the carriers in Motuan, and "water," we three white men croaked at each other in English.

There was no need, for once, to order the natives to pick up their loads and start. Already they had shouldered the burdens and were pushing and jamming, treading on each other's heels in their eagerness to take the trail that the three policemen had cut as they went along.

There was nothing orderly about that mad dash down the spur. We went at a stumbling run, tripping over logs and roots and stones, sliding down treacherous, mossy banks, scrambling up equally treacherous ones. The devils of thirst were driving us hard, and we plunged ahead, following the slashes of the constables' knives, heedless of accident and possible injury.

Suddenly we rounded a huge clump of bamboos and our eyes fell upon Sonana and Yawana and Waimura, patiently hacking away with their knives at the bamboo and underbrush. They did not turn around as we charged down upon them,

but lifted their arms wearily and brought the knives down again in the mechanical way of men who have reached the limit of physical endurance.

“Water,” we cried at them, “where is the water?”

With knife poised in air Corporal Sonana turned to face us. His black face was ghastly with his agony.

“There is no water,” he muttered.

“But the shot,” we insisted. “We heard a shot.”

Even before he confirmed it, I knew that we had been mistaken, that a falling tree or a loosened boulder crashing through the underbrush had made that boom we had heard.

“Master,” gasped the corporal, “we fired no shot,” and turned back to his hacking at the bamboo.

Darkness found us still cutting a trail toward the river, carriers with buckets and pans at the heels of the men who wielded the knives, waiting for the instant when they should cut through that seemingly interminable wall of virgin growth and find the way to the stream open.

Suddenly there was a yell. They were out of

the jungle. Then the childlike natives burst into wailing and weeping. The trail-cutters had come out at the top of another precipice and there would be no water for us that night !

We found a little cleared space and threw up the tents and lit the fires. No one spoke of supper. The carriers had only a few mats of rice to see them through and they had no water in which to cook it. And we knew that our food-boxes held only flour, oatmeal, tea, coffee—nothing that we could use without water.

About the fires the carriers and police stretched out and, for the first time in all those weeks, there was no singing, no chaff, no laughter. We white men, stretched out upon our cots, did not speak either. Each in his own way and according to his beliefs, I think every one of us was resigning himself to the death that we felt sure would overtake us on the morrow.

Under one canvas fly, atop the loads, reposed the skull to which old Fornier had clung all day. In the glimmer of the fires I fancied that I discerned a sardonic grin, and suddenly I felt toward the grisly thing a violent hatred, as if it were to blame for all our troubles.

Suddenly back in the jungle burst out a weird, blood-curdling chant that was unmistakably human. What could it be? We glanced at one another and out at the natives, but no one spoke. Then the chant broke off and was succeeded by a high-pitched howl, in which a second voice joined in. We lay back upon the cots, for we knew only too well that it was only Api and Kauri, the cookce boys, following us up, only God knew how.

Closer and closer they came until they were within the circle of the camp fires' light, two miserable wretches in whose feverish eyes there was no sign of intelligence. They dropped down to the ground beside their fellows, still howling, and no one chided them or offered to boot them away from there.

Then it began to rain !

Without warning rumble of thunder or flash of lightning or sound of wind the heavens opened up and a lashing, driving downpour was upon us. Hope, almost gone, came back in a twinkling and we white men leaped from our cots and, yelling at the natives to come and help us, seized pans, kettles, buckets, cups—anything and every-

thing that would hold a few precious drops of water—and set them under the dripping edges of the tents.

The carriers, too far gone, apparently, to realize that in that rain we had so harshly berated day after day lay our salvation. They stared at us running and rushing about, but made no move to help. The police, however, responded. They attacked the bamboos about us with their knives, cutting off lengths and jabbing them into the ground where the water that missed our vessels would run into them.

As suddenly as it had begun the rain ceased, as if God in His Heaven had seen our misery and sent us those blessed five minutes of downpour to relieve it. When we had carefully poured together every drop that we had collected, there was scarce two buckets of it—not much to be divided among all our numbers. But divide it we did, a third of a cup to each man, black and white alike, and never did cold, sweet spring water taste better to me than my few sips from a cup, smelling as it did of mildewed canvas and the sweaty black bodies that had borne the canvas over the mountains.

Dawn found us wearily ascending the trail down which we had come pell-mell the night before. Time was the essential thing now. One more spur remained to us and down it we must find or cut a trail. If it, like the others, ended at a precipice high above the river, we must go down that precipice or perish in the attempt. Once the sun came out in all its intensity our sufferings, alleviated by that short drink during the night, would be renewed and without either food or water we could not go on. To go back, over the many miles that we had come after bridging the river in the face of the hostile people of the Pole, was more that it seemed we could stand.

It was near the top of the spur that there was a rustling in the underbrush and a small, grey animal shot into our midst. I heard a shrill scream behind me, the crash of a heavy body plunging into the brush and Payeye, the mountain boy, rose with a small kangaroo rat in his hands. His long nails tore at its throat and when the warm blood gushed out I saw his mouth go to the wound and turned my head that I might not see him drink his fill.

We reached the end of the spur and turned toward the beginning of the one spur we had not tried. We had stopped to scout around a bit hoping that perhaps there might be some hollow depression in the ground that had been filled by that life-saving rain. Old Fornier was at my side, stoical and silent, and under his arm was that accursed skull. A wave of rage seized me, and I reached out my hand, snatched it from him and flung it far to one side.

His eyes followed it in its flight and marked the place where it had fallen. Then he started toward the spot.

"Leave it alone," I cried.

"Yes, master," he replied, but his superstitious black mind would not let him thus dispose of it without some effort to atone for our violation of the taboo surrounding it. He made his way to where it had fallen and bent over to search for it. Then a cry burst from his lips.

"*Dala, dala*," he yelled, and in Motuan "*dala*" means a trail.

Pausing only for my nod of permission, Dengo leaped to the old man's side, then he was off like a deer down the spur. For a moment I

saw his bushy head bobbing up and down, then he disappeared.

During minutes that seemed an eternity we waited, then the report of a rifle, not to be mistaken this time, split the air, closely followed by a second. Dengo was signalling that the trail ran straight and true to the river !

In the moment before he, too, joined our wild stampede I saw old Fornier pick up the skull, jab his stick into the ground and set the skull on top of it.

CHAPTER XXIII

LEECHES !

COMMON sense told us white men that, having gone so long without a real drink, we must control ourselves when we reached the river. Instinct did it for the natives. They, like ourselves, were content with a few sips at first—just enough to wash out parched mouths and throats and allay the keenness of the craving of the stomach. They, too, it seemed, knew that water may be absorbed through the skin and, when they were cool, stepped into the river and washed.

Rice was parcelled out from our diminished food supply and to eke out our own scanty fare we shared it with them. Then we set about bridging the river. Unlike that of the day before, it was deep and the current swift at that particular spot, so that floating logs into place against a large boulder on either side was more difficult

and more dangerous. Neither could so many men be used, so that we seized the opportunity to have our clothing and blankets washed and spread out to dry in the hot sun. In order to have everything clean we stripped, tied towels about our middles, wore hats to keep the sun off our shoulders and donned our boots as a protection against the sharp rocks.

When finally the bridge was finished, Humphries and Downing crossed just as they were and left me to handle things in the rear. They sat down on the far side and began dressing, but I ordered my clothing carried across, preferring not to chance a ducking in fresh, dry garments when my time came to go over. The carrier who was acting as an orderly for me—Dengo being busy with the bridge—seemed to understand, and I forgot everything else in keeping the loads moving over that unstable bridge.

At last I was done, looked about to see that nothing had been forgotten and went across.

The head of the line of carriers had moved on up the mountain along a trail that had been found. It was getting time for the daily down-

pour that in twenty-six days had missed only once—the day previous, when we were so sorely in need of water—and the sooner we found a camp site the better. So Humphries had taken the lead and moved right out, leaving a policeman to hustle along the carriers as they crossed the stream.

His justifiable haste to be on the move cost me dearly. For when I sought my clothing it was to discover that my temporary and thoughtless carrier-orderly had packed every garment in my swag-bag and it had gone on ahead up the mountain. There I was, garbed only in boots, hat and that ridiculous towel, and facing a stiff climb through brush, boulders and what not. I shuddered at the possibility that we might run into saw-edged grass and for the first and only time deserted my post. Leaving a policeman in charge of the rear-guard, I went up that trail as fast as I could, chasing that swag-bag.

Shouting at the carriers to get out of my way, I forced my bare legs to carry me at a surprising rate, considering the trail. It must have been a laughable figure I cut, for they began to howl with mirth, and whenever I was struck by a

branch or gouged and let out a heartfelt "ouch," it seemed to tickle them immensely.

That swag-bag was the most important thing in the world to me just then, however, and I persisted until I found it—third from the head of the line. Then and there I called a halt while I got into my clothes. Humphries had gone on down to take my place at the rear and I took the lead.

An hour later the constable who was ahead of me, swinging a knife to clear the trail of vines that crossed it, stooped abruptly in a listening attitude. I held up my hand to enjoin silence on those behind us and signalled two other constables to come up.

"Man, *taubada*," whispered the leader, and we ran a few feet up the trail and hid beside it. It is characteristic of the Papuan jungle that you can see only a few yards from you and, looking back, not one of the carriers was visible to me. We did not know whether the man that the constable had said was approaching was alone, but he was humming loudly a sort of sing-song chant that proved he did not suspect our nearness.

He was loping carelessly along downhill and almost before we knew it he was in our midst, we had risen and flung ourselves upon him and a terrific struggle was in progress. Our numbers weighted him down after a bit and he lay still, his breath coming in tremendous gasps and his rolling eyes proclaiming his terror. Even when we let him up with a constable holding tightly to each arm, and tried by smiling and talking soothingly to him to convey that we had no intention of killing him, his fear of us did not abate.

It took several minutes to get him to stop trembling and cease his efforts at frequent intervals to break loose. To this day I feel tinges of pity for that chap, unable to understand us, seeing his first white man no doubt and—judging by what he did later—firmly convinced that we were enemies who had come to attack his people. All that we wanted was a guide, but all of our signs seemed to mean nothing to him. He did understand, however, when we offered a knife to him. He took it after we had shown him what it was for, and there was an appreciative grin on his face.

Then while we were waving our hands toward

the top of the mountain, pointing to the trail and then to him, it seemed to dawn upon him what we wanted. He showed it in every line of his face and in his own gestures. The constables relaxed their hold on him. Instantly he had knocked one of them down by a fierce lunge of his shoulders, threatened the rest of us with that huge knife and began to edge away. A quick-witted constable swung his rifle by the barrel, caught our prisoner back of the ear and sent him to the ground. Before he could get up we had relieved him of the knife, clapped handcuffs on him and tied him to a constable, as we had done with that little viper Muria back in Kapatea.

Although he was sullen he led us up the trail then like a good fellow, but there was in his eyes a something, sinister and treacherous, that I did not like. Yet when we came to a fork in the trails, and he insisted upon taking the left-hand one and closing the other by means of a freshly broken branch, I knew no reason why we should refuse.

It was only when we had climbed for some time after that and I discovered that this trail we were

following had fallen into disuse, that at spots it was so overgrown as to be almost indistinguishable, that I stumbled on what I think was the truth—the trail he had not wanted us to follow led to his village and this one we had taken behind him led away from it. Still it was in the general direction we wanted to go, and there was no advantage in going back to the forks.

What followed was just another of those nightmares of scaling slippery heights, clinging by fingers to anything that offered, following tiny ledges a few inches wide which overhung chasms hundreds of feet deep, crossing slippery logs and suffering countless mental agonies that are so vivid in my memory.

I was exhausted when at last we reached the peak and found ourselves in a village of less than a dozen huts, too exhausted to notice just then that the huts were falling to pieces with decay, that cobwebs and mildew were everywhere. Even when I did learn it I didn't care, although I wondered rather vaguely why we had been brought there. The thunder was pealing, lightning was flashing and, after a bit, when the carriers reached us, we began throwing up the tents.

Our guide had been tied into a corner post of a hut. We should have gagged him. Suddenly he put his hands to his mouth and began bellowing what I suppose was a warning to his fellows and a statement of his own predicament. There was an answering bellow from across the valley, and he subsided, glaring at us defiantly. It was impossible not to admire his courage, believing, as he must have done, that his life would be forfeited for that bellowed message.

The chaps in his village kept up their yelling throughout the night, but our prisoner would not answer them, probably figuring that he would not be harmed if he kept still. His silence, coupled with our camp fires, must have caused the others to think that we had killed and cooked him, although we heard none of the wailing which would have resulted if they had been certain of it.

We took him a short way the next morning, freed him of the handcuffs when we came across a good trail and gave him back the knife. Like a flash he had whirled and disappeared in the jungle.

I've often wondered if the leeches which we ran into a few minutes later didn't have something



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to do with the abandonment of the village we had just quitted. Thousands of these blood-suckers covered the ground and our natives must have suffered greatly. They scratched and plucked at the horrible things that clung to them and scraped themselves with knives until their bodies were raw. As for us who had boots, puttees and clothing, we had a terrible time. The leeches found a way to our skin through everything. We could not stop to pull off our garments and rid ourselves of the pests because we would have scores more on us immediately. There was nothing to do but keep on as rapidly as we could until we came to some huge boulders which were free of the leeches.

White men and black we climbed on to the rocks, stripped to the skin and picked leeches off each other. All of us were streaked with our own blood, those of us who wore garments of any kind found them soaked in crimson, and our boots were a mass of dead leeches and blood inside. The leeches had been small enough to get into the boots through the eyelets but, bloated after they had drunk their fill, had been unable to get out again. It was weeks before their bites healed

and our tortures during the next few days never will be wholly forgotten.

Down this mountain we went and up another, through jungle of the heaviest kind, following no trail but cutting our own. Then it was that Humphries came up from behind when Downing and I halted the line in a little clearing for a rest. His face was flushed, his eyes queer and, without preliminary, he accused us of not following the course we had agreed upon.

"You said a little east of south-east, didn't you?" I asked.

"I did and you two idiots have been going south-west," he snapped.

"We've been going by my compass and checking by Downing's," I said.

"Then your damned compasses have gone crazy," he retorted. "I've been doing some checking with mine and I know what direction you've been taking."

We stared at him in amazement and for a few minutes harsh and bitter words flew back and forth. Suddenly Humphries clapped his hands to his head and dropped on a log. I went to him and felt of his pulse. It was racing madly and

he was burning up with fever. His unjust accusation and anger were due to a touch of delirium and he didn't remember anything about it afterwards.

He got up after a bit and started when we did, but he weaved as he walked and we couldn't pry a word out of him. Two constables kept right beside him and supported him at times. Every two hours we gave him quinine and we kept it up for two days. Then, as suddenly as it had come on him, the fever left him. It has a way of doing that in the tropics.

The very afternoon that he was stricken, however, we suddenly topped a steep ascent to see on a mountain side in the distance a tiny group of whitewashed buildings shining in the late afternoon sun and, although neither Downing nor I ever had seen them before, we knew that we were in sight of the end of our dangers and hardships, for those buildings marked the site of the Popole Catholic Mission in Mafulu district and there we felt certain of real beds, real food and rest, and from Popole to Yule Island, sixty miles away over the ranges, ran a missionary-made road over which pack horses can and do travel.

It took us two days to reach Popole, however, although from where we stood it looked not more than a couple of miles away. And for me was left one more harrowing experience.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SECRET OF YAPITZE

AMBO district, which is separated from Mafulu district by a narrow torrent, is still very savage. Differing in language and customs, Ambo has not come under the influence of the mission at Popole, and Father Fastre, the bearded priest in charge, wisely has confined his efforts toward keeping his immediate vicinity as peaceful as it ever is possible to keep a savage people peaceful.

So, while from the mountain tops in Ambo we could see the buildings of Popole, we were still in hostile country, and our efforts to find a trail that would take us in the right direction failed so repeatedly that we were ready to believe that what we saw was not the mission itself but a mirage.

We pitched camp in the afternoon after we first had seen the mission from afar, and those of

us who had fire-arms went out in pairs to locate a likely trail. Dengo was with me, as usual, and his keen eyes spotted a hunting pad on the other side of a ravine that looked promising, and he wanted to investigate it. The prospect of ascending and descending and following up that pad to see where it went did not appeal to me. I was tired and insufficiently fed, and my knees were paining me from continued exertions, so I told him to go ahead and I would take it easy back to camp.

He looked at me askance, reluctant to leave one whom he had come to regard as his special charge, although I think he had come to the conclusion that usually I was pretty well able to take care of myself. Finally, however, he moved off, and after watching him disappear along the little trail with a wave of the hand, I turned back in the direction of camp. I knew just where it was, and I had taken careful note of several landmarks after we had left it. There was no trail to follow and my footing was none too good, so that when a moss-covered stone gave way I was thrown to the ground rather heavily. Considerably jarred, I laid there a few minutes,

and, overcome by weariness, my eyelids closed and I fell asleep.

When I awoke darkness was falling rapidly. The folly of trying to find my way back to camp immediately was apparent. Perhaps when the moon had risen I could do it, but I certainly did not propose to risk my neck scrambling around that mountainside in the dark. If it came to the worst and the moon proved of no help, I would stay where I was until dawn. I put my back against the bole of a great tree and thought regretfully of even the scanty meal that would have been mine if I had reached camp. Although I knew there was no particular danger, I pulled my revolver from its holster and laid it upon my lap.

I knew that my absence would cause worry after awhile, but it couldn't be helped. If I fired a shot and it was heard, a search for me would be made, but it was asking a great deal of weary men when I was perfectly all right, and I decided against it. I made myself as comfortable as I could and slept again.

A crash in the underbrush awoke me. My hand sought and gripped the butt of the revolver, and I strained my ears to catch a repetition of

the sound which had startled me. But neither they nor my eyes, peering into the intense darkness, told me anything. The jungle had relapsed into weird, uncanny silence. The moon was up, but obscured by heavy clouds.

Over and over I asked myself what had caused that crash. Until I knew, my nerves would be on edge. New Guinea has no large animals except wallabies, emus and wild pigs. Any one of them would have continued noisily on its way. Interlaced vines and creepers, stretching like a great net from tree to tree, would have deadened the sound of a falling branch.

Failing one of these causes, that crash might have been made by a human being, and for many miles around, so far as I knew, the only persons with the exceptions of the members of our own party, were savages. Had one of them, cruising the jungle, stumbled over something and, warned by my alarmed stirring that he was not alone, had the presence of mind to lie still where he had fallen?

Confirmation of the fear that a human being was near me came in a faint sound which I identified as that of air being cautiously drawn

into the lungs and just as carefully expelled. As I stealthily lifted my hand to point my revolver at the spot from which I thought the breathing was coming, my eyes fell upon the luminous dial of my watch. It was just midnight!

I dared not fire the weapon. If that dark blotch which I fancied moved ever so slightly was a savage, it was unlikely that he was alone. His fellows would not be far off. While the report of my revolver might frighten him, and them, away, it was just as likely to bring them buzzing around my ears. What was a savage mountain man doing abroad in the night, anyhow? Only a most exceptional thing. Had they caught a glimpse of me in the afternoon and been stalking me?

The seconds dragged into minutes, the minutes into hours. Once, unable to bear the torture any longer, I moved my cramped legs and instantly became aware that who, or what, was lying there in the brush a few yards away was on the alert too. I wondered if his poison-tipped arrow would find my heart before my bullet could find his as soon as it became light enough, at dawn, for one of us to catch a glimpse of the other.

Came at last that hour when the deepest silence of all holds the jungle in its grip, when the night has not yet passed nor the day yet begun—the hour before dawn. The end would not long be delayed. Cautiously, inch by inch, I drew my legs under me and got to my feet. While I believed that my revolver gave me the advantage in the battle that I felt sure was to come, I wanted to be on my feet if the balance swung against me.

During those seemingly unending moments since midnight I had made my plans. That other man, somewhere out in front of me, held his fate in his own hands so far as I was concerned. I had no wish to hurt him. The first hostile move must come from him. If he bent his bow or drew back his spear, I would fire and trust my bullet would find him before he could harm me. If, laying eyes upon me, he should turn and flee as I had seen other savages do, he would be followed by my gratitude and not my lead.

It all hinged upon our seeing each other at the same instant. If, however, I saw him first, I would take the offensive. I would charge at him, hoping to frighten him into flight.

Only as a last resort would I use the revolver.

I sensed, rather than saw, the tiny rift in the darkness which bespoke the coming of day. With the revolver held straight out before me and my finger taking up the slack of the trigger, I bent forward.

Slowly the trees began to assume shape and that dark blotch which I had watched so carefully took on the outlines of a log.

Even as my eyes darted along its length for some sign of another human being, I saw the top of a bushy head slowly rising above it. Then I yelled and leaped across the space between us as he rose to meet me.

A yard away I stopped and we stared foolishly at each other. Then the tension broke and I burst into laughter, while he fairly howled with mirth.

Dengo, trying to find his way to camp in the darkness, had become lost and had mistaken me for a cannibal as I had mistaken him.

I shall not tell of how finally we found our way to Popole, rested there a couple of days, then made our way down the missionary-made road to the coast. It was a hard bit of travel, but

devoid of anything that would interest the casual reader.

We were saying good-bye to our carriers after paying them off and they had paid us the unique tribute of asking to shake hands. Kaiva, village constable of Maipa, was among the last. He seemed ill at ease, started to say something, thought better of it, mumbled a good-bye and went off with his fellows.

To Constable Maikili, however, he said something that puzzled us when it was repeated to us. It was to the effect that back in the mountains where lies Kapatea a man may be dead, according to a native, but be very much alive from the white man's view-point.

"I wonder," said Humphries, "if he meant that Yapitze still lives. We probably won't know unless some day I get the chance to go back to Kapatea and ask Muria. I'll get the truth out of the treacherous little rat if I do."

"Kapatea," I replied. "I wouldn't go back if I knew I'd learn the truth. I wouldn't have missed having a look at inland Papua for anything, but I'm quite sure I wouldn't want to have a second look if it meant a repetition of what we've

been through. But, look here, old chap, you're going to stay here. If ever you do learn anything, let me know."

"I will," he promised.

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Months later, pounding out this story on my typewriter, the postman brought two letters. One was from Downing, making hurried preparations to take a government position in New Guinea. It enclosed two clippings from Australian papers.

The first clipping told of a patrol sent into the Papuan mountains under Patrol Officer Flint to visit some of the tribes in the territory to which we had penetrated.

! "At a village named Tavivi," it went on, "the patrol found strong opposition and was driven back by the savages under the leadership of a mysterious individual, Yapitze, who was once reported dead. Several of the patrol were wounded and one native policeman killed. The patrol retired after inflicting heavy casualties on the attackers. The dead constable was buried by his comrades and efforts made to conceal the grave, but from a neighbouring hill-top they looked

back and saw the people of Tavivi digging up the body, which they proceeded to roast and eat. A punitive expedition is in prospect."

"Yapitze," I said excitedly to myself. "Could it be that we were hoaxed after all and that Yapitze is still alive?"

I seized the second clipping.

"There is a peculiar custom among some of the mountain tribes of Papua, according to a recent discovery," it said. "When a savage slays another whose strength and prowess he envies, he may take the name of his victim, and, according to the belief of the natives, with the name he obtains all of the dead man's qualities which he admires."

Comprehension burst upon me. Yapitze, the diminutive of body but mighty of brain, had ambushed and slain Muria, the chief he envied, and discarded his own name for that of the murdered man. So far as he and his fellows were concerned, Yapitze was dead, but Muria lived. In our ignorance we had hoaxed ourselves. The man we wanted had been with us for days, leading us in our search for himself. I wonder if to himself he did not admit the humour of the situa-

tion, for remember that he knew the white man's ways from what he had learned in jail, and he must have suspected that no native custom would have stayed the hand of the government—that his change of name would not have prevented it from meting out to him the punishment for his crimes.

I think, too, that I understand that dramatic moment when we stood in Tavivi watching those savages charging down the village street upon Muria, or Yapitze, as he faced them with that little tin whistle—the magic whistle of Yapitze—in his mouth and by its blasts compelled them to do his will. He had not wanted to lead us to Tavivi. He had resorted to trickery to keep us from getting there. Was he afraid that the relatives of the man he had slain and whose name he had appropriated would seek to pay back? I think that's the answer, and I think, too, that with death at the hands of his own people menacing him he seized the psychological moment to use the once magical whistle on them and regain his old power. Anyhow, it seems as if Kapatea has "gone wild" again, and that Yapitze once more leads its cannibals.

Here is part of what Humphries wrote :

“ His Excellency is coming here to Abau in a few days to inspect the district of which I am in charge. I think he is going to send me with the punitive expedition to Kapatea. I hope so. I want to bring Yapitze down to the coast and even up our score against him. The rainy season is just setting in. It will be some months before the trip can be made. I know you said you never wanted to see inland Papua again. But wouldn't you like to get a crack at Yapitze ? Wouldn't you ? You've got plenty of time to get here. Until the last possible moment I'll be hoping, but if you don't come, old chap, I'll be thinking of you often when the billy boils.”

When the billy boils ! Kapatea again ! A chance to even up on Yapitze ! The deep, dank jungle ! Those mist-encircled mountains ! By George, I do want to go.

THE END

